THREE BOYS *in the* MOUNTAINS

JOE CODY

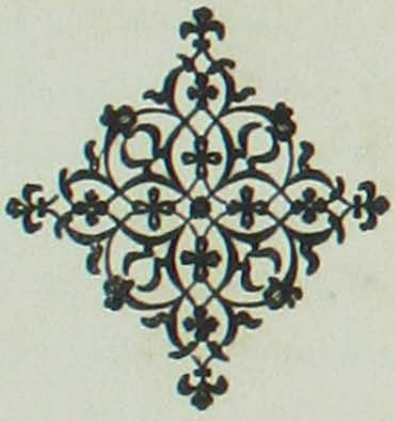
No 5032A

STORIES FROM THE AMERICAN BOY

JIM GALLOWAY, THE TRAPPER.

THREE BOYS IN THE MOUNTAINS

By "JOE CODY"



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PREFACE

THE author of "Three Boys in the Mountains" has attempted, at our request, to write a story of adventure for boys devoid of impossible incidents and questionable morals. The race with buffaloes described in Chapter VII was not an unusual occurrence in the early days of railroading in the West. Trains were often delayed for hours by the closing in upon them of multitudes of these animals.

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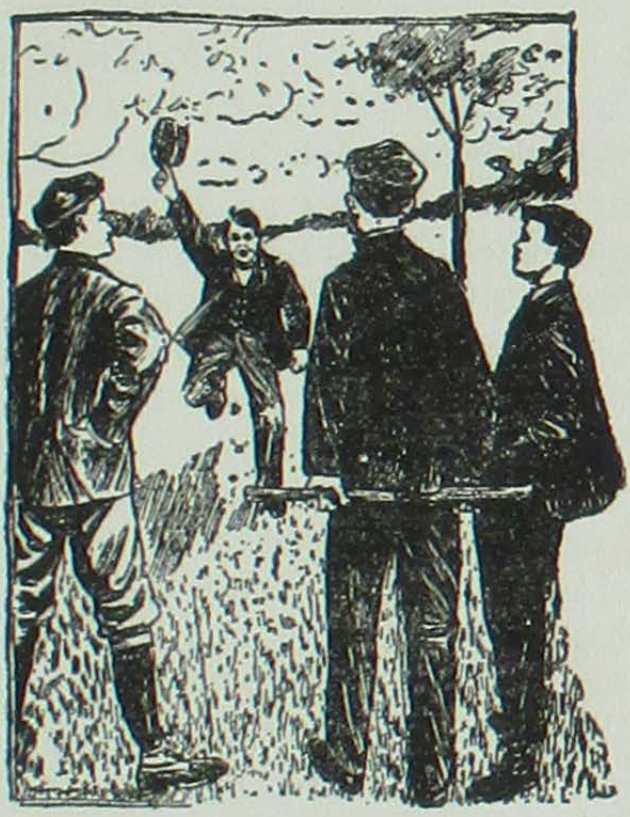
THREE BOYS IN THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER I

Planning

"HURRAH, fellows, I'm going to climb Pike's Peak!" exclaimed Jack Carroll excitedly



" Hurrah, fellows, I'm going to climb Pike's Peak!"

as he rushed pell-mell into a group of boys on the ball ground who were discussing the game that was to come off the following day between

the "Stars," the crack club of the neighboring town, and the "Hickories," their own home club, to which they belonged.

"When are you going to start?" asked his cousin, Frank Chapman, a boy somewhat older than himself and a little less lively in temperament. The question was asked rather testily, as Jack was always going to do many wonderful things, few of which he ever really did do.

"Why, just as soon as I can get ready," answered Jack, between gasps for breath. "You see it's this way: Father has a friend in the mountains who is an artist. He paints pictures of Indians. He can do it better than anyone else because he lives with them most of the time. He knows them by heart. Well, you know how much I have wanted to see the mountains; so father wrote to Mr. Sinclair, that's his friend's name, and asked him if he would keep an eye on me for a few weeks if I turned up some day out there, and he wrote back, 'Of course I will. Send the boy along. I will show him some Rocky Mountain life and it will do him good.' So I am going." Jack ended with a toss of his hat into the air and two or three steps that might well be taken for an introduction to an Indian war dance.

Every boy in the group was busy thinking by this time, but not one of them had the courage to say a word, for the truth is that each one was inwardly wishing he was Jack Carroll and wondering if anything so splendid could ever happen to him.

Frank, who, as has been said, was Jack's cousin, had never known a time when he and Jack had been separated for a whole week, so he could not restrain a feeling of envy and not a little bitterness of heart that Jack was going to have all this fun and adventure and he be left out.

There was some more talk about the trip, the coming ball game being entirely lost sight of, and Jack told the boys what he knew about Pike's Peak. His father, who had been in the mountains several years before, had described to him this snowy peak that rises companionless from its broad foothills, and from the very edge of the "Great Plains," eight thousand feet into the air. He had been told how, less than half a century before, it was unknown to the white man — the hunting ground of the Indian and the home of the wild beast; how the early travelers to California had swept three hundred miles to the northward, by way of the Oregon

trail, or far to the southward, on the Santa Fe trail, leaving these mighty mountains alone to the red man; how in 1806 Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike first caught sight of its snowy summit, and how ten days later, after forced marches, he reached its base and afterwards attempted to scale its rugged steeps, meeting with failure, which he recorded in his diary in the words, "No human being can ascend to the summit"; how Lieutenant Long, in 1819, Fremont, the Pathfinder, in 1843, and Ruxton, the intrepid explorer, four years later, were fascinated with its grandeur and its beauty.

Jack, since hearing his father's description of the mountains, had longed to see them and explore their fastnesses, and now, as he said, he could scarcely believe that he was actually going to see them and climb their rocky sides and stand on their snowy tops.

There was one other boy in the group who, with Frank Chapman, said nothing during Jack's excited talk; that was Ned Roberts, the most popular boy in town, the best ball player in the Hickories, of sturdy physique, honest and hearty, and just the very boy to be the captain of as fine a lot of boys as ever swung a bat. Ned was the youngest of the three boys,

but a natural-born leader. His enthusiasm and his quickness of thought and action put him at once at the head of every boy enterprise in his neighborhood; and Ned, too, was doing a lot of thinking.

The upshot of it all was that when the little group broke up and the boys went home to supper, two of them, Frank and Ned, went with well-defined plans to go to Pike's Peak, if they could get parental consent, and if Jack and Mr. Sinclair would agree to it. They were sure of Jack; they had not much misgiving as to Mr. Sinclair; but their parents — well, when a boy sets out to get consent to do a thing, if the thing itself is not wrong and harmful, it is not such a hard matter. So it came about within a week that three mothers were washing, ironing, darning, and sewing buttons on tighter. The three boys slept in one bed, turn about, at the home of each, during the last few nights before the start for Colorado, for they had so many plans to make, so many matters to talk over and decide, that, in fact, they had made the trip in their minds more than a dozen times before the day of their departure.

"Do you suppose we will get lost in the mountains?" whispered Jack one dark night

a good hour or two after the light was put out.

"I suppose we will," replied Frank.

"It wouldn't be much fun if we didn't," added Ned, brave enough. "There wouldn't be anything worth telling about when we got home if we didn't get lost or shot at by Indians."

"Or fall over a precipice," suggested Frank.

"Say, wouldn't it be fun to get caught in a big storm of thunder and lightning on Pike's Peak?" asked Ned. "To see lightning underneath us and hear thunder coming up from away down under our feet!"

"I suppose there are caves in the sides, so that if it should rain we could get in," said Jack.

"Yes, but I don't think I'd trust myself in a cave at night. I am not anxious to get acquainted with bears that way," replied Frank.

"That reminds me," said Ned, sitting bolt upright in bed, "we must take a stock of matches — the kind that light in the wind. We might want to light a signal of distress."

"Or fire one at the bears," suggested Frank.

"I don't suppose they have any matches out West," added Jack, with mock gravity.

Then all three boys punched one another in

the ribs and laughed till their sides ached and the bed clothes were in a hopeless tangle, and a big but kindly voice came up somewhere from below, "Here, you boys, be quiet! It is nearly midnight and you are keeping the whole house awake." A few more sly punches and smothered laughs, and the three boys were dreaming of Pike's Peak lifting its snowy summit till it pierced the sky, its hoary sides covered with majestic forests, its tops encircled by wreaths of smoke from a thousand wigwams.

CHAPTER II

On the Way

JACK's father was to go with the boys as far on their way as Chicago, where they were to take the night train for Denver; there Mr. Carroll's friend was to meet them. No one of the boys had ever been in a large city; so the big buildings, the crowded streets, the great rush and rattle made them feel a little queer and uncomfortable.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Carroll of Frank, as they were walking down La Salle street on the day of their arrival in Chicago. The boy had not spoken for fully half an hour.

"Why, sir?" asked Frank timidly.

"Well, you have said scarcely a word since we landed in Chicago. You are not homesick, are you?"

"No, I guess not — but I never thought it was so big as this! I wouldn't like to live here. The buildings are so big and ——"

"Say, young feller, wot yer doin'? Ye'll git run in fer takin' up all de street, see?"

Mr. Carroll turned to find Ned standing awkwardly in front of a dirty, ill-featured lad,

who held a bundle of papers under his arm, and, with an air of braggadocio, was peering out at Ned from under a poor excuse for a hat.

"I don't want any more of the street than you do, I guess," retorted Ned, showing a little warmth.

"Well, yer needn't tink I'm goin' to git off'n the earth cause you're on it. Seems ter me yer kin size up dat orfice building 'thout standin' all over de street. Do yer want to buy it? Yer mus' have jist got in. Where's yer lugs?"

Ned was about to make a retort in kind when Mr. Carroll, seeing a crowd gathering, put a hand on the shoulder of his protege and faced him about down the street, telling him at the same time that the best policy to pursue in a big city is to attend strictly to business and not get into people's way, and that a crowded city sidewalk is a poor place from which to take overhead observations. Ned more than once glanced over his shoulder, as if to return and give the boy a lesson in politeness, but the newsboy and his billingsgate were soon lost in the crowd.

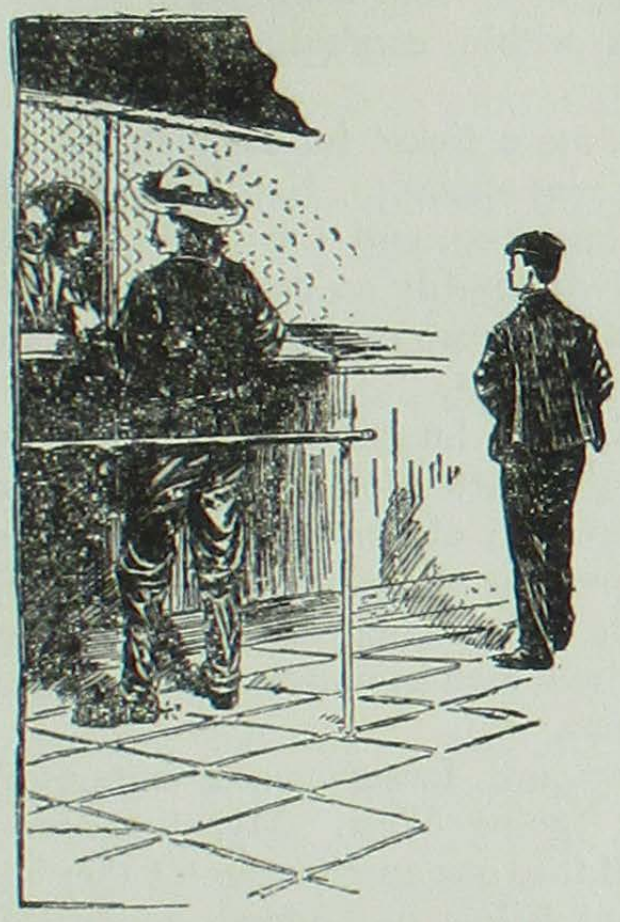
"You mustn't judge of all newsboys by that one," added Mr. Carroll. "When one thinks of the kind of homes these boys live in, if

indeed they live in any, and the life they are driven to lead, it is really strange that many of them are brave, honest little fellows, and deserve the sympathy of every boy — especially of such boys as you are, with your good homes, good friends and good times."

Mr. Carroll pointed out to the boys the objects of interest in the great city, and when late that night they entered the depot they were as tired a lot of boys as ever dragged one foot after another at the end of a day of sight-seeing.

The big depot was ablaze with lights; people were coming and going; bells were clanging; and men were announcing trains — bewildering, indeed, to boys who were accustomed only to the sights and sounds of a little country town. In the waiting-room was a motley crowd of travelers of every description, and for the first time the boys saw a real trapper. Yes, sure, he must be a cowboy or a trapper; for he wore a big brimmed hat, a full suit of buckskin, and there were spurs on his high top-boots. His hair, too, was long and his face swarthy, as if burned by the suns of a score of summers and toughened by the blasts of an hundred storms.

"I wonder where he's going?"
"I'll bet he can ride a bronco."



"Gimme a ticket for Denver."

"And hit the bull's-eye every time."
"I suppose he's got a gun in his pocket."
"Two or three of them."
"Don't you wish he would go on our train?"

"There he goes to buy a ticket."

"Say, I'm going to see," and Ned took a few cautious steps from home base, as it were, till he was within earshot of the ticket-seller's window.

"Gimme a ticket for Denver."

That was enough. Ned slipped back to tell his companions, and the three congratulated themselves heartily on the fact that the picturesque stranger was actually going on the same train with them.

As the big hunter stalked away the boys turned their attention to another queer sight; a whole family of strange-looking people, three grown persons and a flock of children all hand in hand, were trailing through the depot, conducted by a man in uniform, who looked like a policeman.

"They are foreigners, I suppose," said Frank, "going West. My, they are afraid they will lose one another, aren't they? I suppose that fellow in uniform can speak their language. They follow him just like sheep, don't they?"

"And they don't look as if they knew any more than sheep do," remarked Jack.

Then as the immigrants were lost in the

crowd, the attention of the boys was attracted to a company of smart tourists who wore clothes the like of which the boys had never seen, and many were the guesses as to whether they were dukes, or lords, or princes, or what; but before they had made up their minds Mr. Carroll returned, and the sonorous call of the train announcer rang out, "All aboard! Denver Limited! All aboard!" The boys' hearts jumped. They were really going. Mr. Carroll took up the hand baggage and led the way out through the pushing crowd to the train, which looked bewilderingly beautiful among its fellows, several of which stood in a long shed awaiting their turn to glide forth into the night.

"This way for the Denver Limited! Denver Limited, third track! This way, please!"

The boys had just time to glance along the rail at the great train and on ahead at the powerful iron horse that was to draw them out into the night and on past the sleeping towns and villages of Illinois, scarcely stopping for rest until it stood for a moment panting on the banks of the Father of Waters, which, to their keen disappointment, they were to cross in the night. They were brave lads — each of them — but the truth must be told: When the last

"All aboard!" rang out in the depot and Mr. Carroll had swung himself from the slowly moving train and waved his hand in a last good-by, the three boys scarcely dared look one another in the face for fear of betraying a little of the nervousness they felt. But they were off, and to their joy, just after starting, they espied, at the forward end of the car in which they were sitting, the object of their greatest interest while in the depot — the man with the broad-brimmed hat and bronzed face.

CHAPTER III

An Interesting Acquaintance

THE three boys could scarcely await the coming of the morning. Indeed, several times during the night they pressed their noses against the car windows and peered out into the darkness, but to no purpose. There was only the heavy roar of the great train to tell them that they were rushing through field and forest, over streams and under hills, to the great prairies of the trans-Mississippi country. When finally the light streamed in at the windows they hurried into their clothes, snatched a hurried breakfast from the big lunch box which Mr. Carroll had had prepared for them in Chicago, and were busily engaged studying their railroad map and trying to make out where they were; but they met with little success, for their eyes rested only on great stretches of rolling country, the like of which in their own hill country they had never seen, which might be in any one of the great States of Iowa, Nebraska, or Colorado, through which they knew they must pass. Great fields of undulating grass that seemed

endless stretched to the very horizon and for miles along the track.

"Isn't it splendid!" exclaimed Jack; "did you ever suppose there was so much country?"

"Why do you suppose people will crowd themselves into big cities like Chicago, with all this land going to waste?" asked Frank wonderingly, unconscious that he was stating a problem which has puzzled older heads than his.

"Oh, what's that?" Ned almost shouted.

"Where?" asked the others in one breath.

"There, quick, before we pass it! There are more of them! See, way over yonder!"

Then the boys caught a glimpse of what was exciting Ned — little animals sitting upon little heaps of dirt — scores of them, in fact, a little colony.

"They must be squirrels!"

"Pshaw, you never saw squirrels acting like that! They look as if they were saying their prayers."

"I'll tell you what they are," said Frank. "They are prairie dogs. They are just like the ones in the pictures in the geography. How funny they are; just like a lot of people, each one sitting before the door of his own house."

"They say," said Jack, "that you will always find owls and rattlesnakes where you find prairie dogs."

"If that's so, I'm glad my ticket doesn't read for any prairie dog town," answered Frank, with a shake of his head.

"Well, that would just suit me," answered Ned bravely. "I want some excitement. I hope I'll not be cooped up in cars and houses all the time I am away. I want to rough it. If I don't get into a rattlesnake's nest or have a fight with a grizzly I'll be sorry I came. Say, let's brace up and get acquainted with that fellow with the big hat. He looks like he might know a good deal about this country. I want to know where we are and I've got a lot of questions I want to ask somebody," and Ned made a move as if to go forward and introduce himself to the trapper.

"Better not," suggested Frank, "you know Mr. Carroll said we must be careful about talking to strangers. We might get taken in. I don't just like his looks."

"Oh, say, we can't do anything or learn anything if we are just going to stay by ourselves and guess at everything," said Jack. "Father didn't mean we weren't to speak to anybody.

We have been gone nearly a day and a night and haven't said a word to a soul but the conductor. I am going to get acquainted."

Two is a majority in a company of three, and that settled it, so the boys moved slowly to the forward end of the car, where the big hat could just be seen over the back of the seat. When they stood before its owner they found him stretched out at full length, his feet, encased in long top-boots, resting on the seat in front of him, his body occupying nearly the whole of the section. The man's eyes were closed and the brim of his big hat shaded his swarthy face. The boys were puzzled as to just how to proceed, but not for long, for the big fellow slowly pulled himself together, sat bolt upright and looked curiously into the eyes of the three boys, who were standing confusedly before him.

"Wall, youngsters, kin I do anything fer ye?"

"Yes, sir, if you please," answered Ned, who was generally quickest to meet an emergency. "We want to know where we are and we thought perhaps you knew better than anyone else on this train."

"Wall, now, I do that. I've ben over this

'ere ground more times that you kin count. I've chased buffalers and follered the herds and trailed Injuns up and down these prairies till I know every inch of 'em. Set down an' tell me whar yer goin'!"

"To Denver, and after that into the mountains," answered Frank.

"Ben thar afore?"

"No, sir."

"Know anyone thar?"

"This boy's father has a friend in Denver who paints pictures and knows all the country and the Indians, and he has promised to give us a good time."

"Huh," grunted the trapper, with a look of disdain. "Paints picters! Likely 'nough he's seen a few half-breed squaws, or maybe he's taken a ride on a stage. The chances is that's 'bout all he knows. I never saw a city chap yet what knew a grizzly's track from a hole in the ground. Takes picters, does he? Wall, a real redskin would make short work o' that feller. Take keer he don't git yer inter trouble. Who are ye and whar d'ye come from?"

Frank gave the information asked for.

"Wall, I'm sorry fer ye. Right sorry. Yer right peart lookin' chaps. But yer ain't goin'

to see anything, I tell yer, with that city chap. I never saw but one city chap yet what was real grit, and he was the nerviest man I ever seen, not barrin' anyone. I'll never fergit that feller the longest day I live." And the big swarthy face turned to the window and nothing was said for fully a minute.

"Youngsters, d'ye mind hearin' a story?" he asked, turning a serious face on the boys.

The three assented with one voice and all took the seat facing the trapper, motionless as statues, their eyes riveted on him, and the story began.

CHAPTER IV

The Trapper's Story

"ONCE'T I was a dare-devil of a feller, livin' back up in the mountains near Fort Bridger. I had played in hard luck, lost my money and friends, and was drinkin' myself crazy. The redskins in them parts was oneasy in them days and it was as much as a feller's life was worth to stick his head out o' the camp. I had come in from the mines, whar I had run through everything, desprit 'nough to give my life away fer a word. Jist about that time the boys in camp was bein' hard pressed fer pervisions, as nuthin' had got through fer some weeks on account of the red varmints who were watchin' us from every bush. I told the boys I'd take a message to the Fort, twenty miles off. I didn't keer much if I was scalped, and I was ready to take any chances, no matter how slim they was, for I was desprit, as I said. The boys told me I was foolish and begged me not to go, and two or three fellers better'n me said they would go in my place, but I told 'em I was the one to go; that I warn't wu'th much anyhow, and thet I would get to the Fort or never

show my face to an honest man agin. The boys give me a hoss — a big critter, strong as iron.

"I rode out o' camp one black night on old 'Lion,' fer thet was the name the boys give him, feelin' thet death was the only thing thet stood 'twixt me and the Fort. I took with me a bottle of fire-water; fact is, youngsters, I was never 'thout it. The stuff was killin' me, but I was stickin' to it as if it was my best friend. Fer two or three miles thet hoss picked his way careful 'long the trail, bein' anxious as if he knew how pertickler it was not to step on a twig or make a false move. I was feelin' purty good at gettin' 'long so well, and took a pull at my bottle, to keep my nerves steady. In a few minutes I swollered another dose of the stuff, and then another, fur I seemed to need it, till I felt the old fire in my brain. I must hev given the spur to old Lion, fer he was now in a wild gallop. Along the trail up the mountains we went, the stones flyin' down the sides from under the critter's hoofs, which were beatin' like an avalanche on the hard mountain path. All to once't a flash of light and the crack of a rifle and my hoss was down, with his crazy fool of a rider strugglin' to free hisself. A

dozen red devils was on me afore I could draw my weepon, and bound me, fightin' like the demon I was.

"Next day when I come to my senses I found myself tied to a tree with cords of buffaler hide, and a hundred redskins holdin' a pow-wow 'round me, tryin' to make up their minds how to get rid o' me. I didn't care what they did with me. I was 'shamed o' my failure and never wanted to see the face of a white man agin. The pow-wow was goin' on afore my very eyes, and to tell the truth, youngsters, I longed to tell them devils they could do their worst. Then all to once't a man, who, even with his blanket and his feathers and his moccasins, I could see was a paleface, stood up 'mong them. I've had lots of supprises: I've come suddenly face to face with a she grizzly and her cubs, and more than once't walked right into the arms of onfriendly Injuns, but I was never more supprised in my life than when I saw a white man standin' there 'mong them bloodthirsty Injuns. He stood there tall and commandin' and begun to talk, movin' his arms back and forth and pointin' up to the sky. Them redskins never moved a muscle. But they didn't seem to like

what he was sayin'. Then he got excited and seemed to get riled. He took his blanket from his shoulders and threw it on the ground. He tore the feathers from his hair an' broke 'em. He stamped his feet. Every redskin looked more and more sullen. Then he talked earnest agin and seemed to be beggin' for suthin', and at last took up his blanket and wrapped it 'round him, folded his arms and stood before them still as marble, his eyes fixed upon an ugly old warrior who seemed to be the chief. It seemed to me he stood there for hours, but I s'pose it was only a minute, and then the old chief said a few words and the hull lot of 'm got up and filed off inter the forest.

"Will you believe me, youngsters, that paleface then walked straight up to me. He began talkin' afore he hed reached me, and as near as I kin rekillect he said, 'My friend, you are a fool, but you are a brave feller. No one but a brave feller would ride through this country when the Injuns are on the warpath, and no one but a fool would let whisky get him into this scrape.' I had nuthin' to say. I knew he was right and I almost felt like askin' him to take his rifle and shoot me, as he couldn't hurt me any more than to do what he was

doin'. But I didn't say nuthin'. 'I am goin' to save your life,' he continued, 'but to do it I have had to risk my own. These Cheyennes owed me a debt, and they have paid it with your life. You are now mine and I kin do with you what I like. I don't know who you are or what you were goin' to do when these redskins caught you, but you are a brave feller and deserve a better fate than to stand agin this tree as a target for tomahawks. As I say, you belong ter me. I bought you and I kin do what I please with you. In a minute I kin call them Injuns back and call our agreement off, or I kin take this knife and cut you free. It is fer you to say what I shall do. But if I save your life it's on one condition, and that is that as long as you live you will let this infernal whisky alone. It has ruined many a brave trapper and miner and now it's got you by the throat. You are a brave feller, but yer not brave 'nough. You know it's yer enemy, but you hain't got the nerve to kill it. I ain't sentimental 'bout this thing, but I won't do a thing to save you till yer promise me that by all that's good and holy you'll never tech liquor agin. What do yer say?'

"Wall, what could I say, youngsters? But

I wasn't goin' to say suthin' jist to get free and then go back on it afterwards. I hed sunk purty low down, but I wasn't no sneak. I felt all the man there was left in me rising up, and it sez to me, 'Promise, Jim, promise; here's yer chance ter be a man agin,' and I up and said it, and I ain't no coward, but right afore that paleface I broke down and cried like a woman. Then that feller whipped out his huntin' knife and cut the strings of hide that was sawin' their way inter my arms and legs and I was free ter go. I didn't know what to say, I was so 'shamed of the fix I was in, but one thing I sez to myself in that minute, 'I'll see that feller agin and I'll do him the best turn fer this day's work he ever had or my name's not Jim Galloway.' So I jist said out loud ter him, 'Stranger, I ain't got words to say thet's good 'nough fer ye now, but afore we part I want yer name. I want ter remember it. I want ter speak it when the devil gits me by the throat.' Then thet feller took from his belt a little picter with his name on the back of it, an' handed it ter me 'thout sayin' a word, and here it is. I carry it with me night an' day, fer somehow I feel that the time'll come when I'll see that man and tell him I've kep' my word."

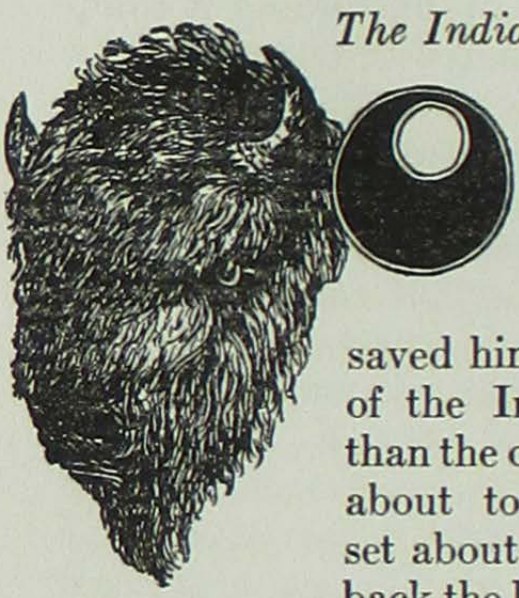
With this the trapper took from his belt a little picture and handed it to one of the boys. They all looked at it and, on turning it over, read the name on the back:

"Robert Sinclair."

"Why, that's the name of father's friend, the Indian painter," cried Jack.

CHAPTER V

The Indian Painter



OF course, the big trapper was both surprised and pleased on the discovery that the man who had saved him from the tomahawks of the Indians was none other than the one whom the boys were about to visit. Naturally, he set about at once trying to take back the hard things he had said a few moments before about that "city chap" who was to show the boys life among the mountains. It made all the difference in the world with the trapper if that "city chap" was the man who had saved his life; so he assured the boys that they were going to fall into good hands and would have the best kind of a time.

The trapper's apologies were really pitiful, and once, as Frank afterwards declared, he saw the big fellow brush something from his eyes suspiciously like a tear, but it couldn't

have been that, he said, for it was hardly to be conceived that an old hunter, hardened by the storms of more than a score of winters and bronzed by unnumbered suns, accustomed to danger and toil, as brave as the wild beasts among which he had passed the greater part of his life, could be guilty of anything so foolish as a tear. Perhaps he was just brushing away in imagination the cobwebs from his memory so that he could see more distinctly with his mind's eye the face of Robert Sinclair as he saw him that day in the mountains.

For some time the four could do little else than talk about this man who had so strangely come into their lives. The trapper plied them with questions innumerable, and before he was satisfied they had to tell him what they had heard from Mr. Carroll about the Indian painter. The story, as Jack gave it, prompted now and then by the other boys, ran something as follows, though the boy did not tell it in exactly this language:

Some years ago Robert Sinclair was a young fellow living in New York city. He belonged to a rich and influential family, his father being a merchant and head of a great importing house. Robert was the youngest of several

brothers, all of whom, save himself, had gone into business and had homes and establishments of their own. Robert, being the last to leave home, became the joy of his mother's life, and was petted and humored in everything.

The father, disappointed in finding his older sons drifting away from him into other lines of business than his own, centered all of his hopes, so far as the carrying on of his own business was concerned, on Robert; but the boy had a will of his own, and was intent on following it. It seemed to be his sole purpose in life to get out of it as good a time as possible. With an artistic temperament and not a little talent with the pencil, careless about matters of money and business, he drifted into a gay, careless world, and there became a favorite. He looked upon his father's business as drudgery, and secretly despised the grind of the office and the details of money making and money saving. At first he spent one or two evenings a week with congenial fellows of his kind, in a way that his conscience scarcely approved of, though it exactly suited his tastes.

Finally he came to hate the quiet and matter-of-fact companionship of his father and mother;

their quiet, earnest life galled him. He became uneasy and restless unless in the freer society of young fellows of Bohemian ways and surroundings. The result was that he sketched a few pictures, which were good — remarkably good, for so little effort and study as was given them — and in addition incurred some vicious habits which, when once started, grew at an alarming pace. In less than two years he was a drunkard — a disgrace to himself and his friends, and almost a stranger in his own home. So low, indeed, did he fall that one day his father, after a last attempt to win him back, shut the door of his home against him and forbade his name being mentioned again by the members of his family.

Robert Sinclair was now thoroughly disgraced. He walked the streets dazed with the suddenness of the blow. He feared his father, feared the world, and particularly did he fear the taunts of friends and the indifference of his former companions. He had no money and no home. In a poor excuse for a studio, shared with another young man much like himself, he had a few belongings — a little canvas, some pencils, crayons, brushes, and colors. Despair led him finally to resolve to

leave New York and start life anew somewhere among strangers. Going to his room he packed up what little he had and set his face toward the new West, scarcely knowing more of it than that it was the Eldorado of many an adventurer and the source of great stories of opportunity. With little realization of the distance, he started on foot. His first stopping place was at a country tavern on the outskirts of the city. Here he offered to sketch the barkeeper's picture in exchange for a drink; the offer was accepted, and by a few deft strokes with the crayon he had done the work, earned the miserable reward and the applause of a group of idlers who frequented the place, each of whom demanded a picture and received it amid the guffaws and jokes of the company, the whole performance ending in more drinks and a penny collection for the artist. It was but a short journey to another tavern or country bar, and here the same performance was repeated. Thus from town to town the young man traveled, eking out a miserable existence, but all the time getting farther and farther away from the scenes of his failure and disgrace. Now and then some lucky happening threw in his way work that

he could do with brush or pencil which gave him money, enabling him to travel some distance by rail. In several places he found congenial though not very profitable employment for some months, the last of these being St. Louis, where he remained for over a year. One day while there he made the acquaintance of one of a company that was fitting out for the long trail across the plains to the new gold fields of the Pacific Coast. He sought and obtained permission to join it; so, buying a horse and such equipment as he could afford, he set out with the little caravan, and after months of severe experiences found himself at the foothills of the Rockies.

At the sight of the great mountains the artist awoke to the grandeur of his true nature, and bidding his friends good-by, he cut loose from the caravan, determined to make his home among this wilderness of beauty and here to live a new life, alone if necessary, in the pure air of mountain and plain. Carrying his trusty rifle and his little bundle of sketching materials, he explored canons and crevices known only to the Indians, climbed the untrodden tops of many a mountain peak, and became the guest and friend of every

Indian band for hundreds of miles in all directions.

The Indians came to love him in their own stolid way, and he in turn treated them as his best friends, and helped and instructed them in many ways. It was on one of these visits to a band of Cheyennes that he had been able to save the life of Jim Galloway the trapper.

This story, told falteringly and in a boy's way, was of intense interest to Jim Galloway. All through the telling of it the trapper kept his eyes riveted on Jack, and after the last words were spoken he sat for some minutes motionless and silent; then he said:

"Youngsters, many's the time I've wondered why that paleface was so arnest in makin' me promise not to tech liquor agin, but I know now."

CHAPTER VI

They see Buffaloes

THE train was still speeding along over the great undulating plain, and the boys several times in their eagerness thought they could see mountains in the distance, but in each case what appeared to be mountains was only little sandhills or clumps of bushes on the horizon, and the trapper told them that they must spend another night on the train before they could get the longed-for glimpse of the Rockies.

"When yer wake in the mornin' you'll see 'em 'long the line o' sky yonder," said he.

As the boys' eyes followed the direction of the trapper's index finger, suddenly Frank caught sight of a strange object in the distance.

"What's that, Mr. Galloway?" he asked.

"Hold on thar, youngster, don't mister me. Jest plain Jim. I wouldn't know myself out here 'cept as Jim, an' the boys would run me out o' camp if I 'lowed a feller ter call me mister. Say Jim an' I'll allers know who yer referrin' to."

Jim, too, had seen the object that occasioned Frank's question, but to him it was no strange sight. He was too much taken up with the thoughts engendered by the story of Robert Sinclair to particularly notice anything else, and then, too, he had failed to realize that everything about them was new to his young companions.

"That's a buffaler," he said, answering Frank's question.

"A buffalo!" exclaimed the three boys in one breath.

"Didn't yer see that buffaler trail we passed back yonder?" asked the trapper.

"I did see something that looked like a path a ways back," said Ned, "and wondered what it was."

"Wall, thet war a buffaler trail, an' it looked fresh, so I knowed thar war buffaler 'round here," said the trapper.

"But I thought," said Frank, "that buffaloes traveled in big droves, and how could they make a narrow path like that?"

"They does ginerally, but 'long 'bout sundown you'll see 'em trail off Injun file, hundreds and thousands sometimes, goin' ter some place whar ther's water. They most ginerally

git thirsty in the evenin'. Some ole bull leads the way an' the rest o' the herd trails along arter. If yer foller one o' them paths on the plains you'll allers find it leads to water. Many's the time I've come upon one o' them when I was 'bout to give out fer a drink, an' I tell yer, youngsters, one o' them trails is a lucky find fer a thirsty trapper."

"No wonder," said Ned, "that the path was cut so deep. It seemed to me that it must have been a foot. But I wish we could get nearer to that buffalo, and I believe we are," and the boys strained their eyes to get a good look at what was as yet little more than a black speck on the horizon.

"He's prob'ly some ole bull driven out o' the herd to shift fer hisself," said the trapper.

"Why should they drive him out?" asked Jack.

"Wall, yer see, when a buffaler bull as has been a leader gits old, some young bull gits to thinkin' he knows better'n the ole one how to boss the rest, an' he'll up an' strut roun' as if ter pick a fight, an' sooner or later he'll git it, an' arter he's had two or three scraps with other ambitious young fellers, the buffaler cows and calves gits ter thinking he's the hull thing,

an' they jest naterally snub the old leader and foller the young un. Then the ole bull he feels disgraced like, fer nobody wants ter foller him any longer, an' he sulks and falls back into the herd and gits run over some day in a stampede, or more ginerally wanders off broken-hearted alone and gits et up by wolves. But thet feller over thar ain't alone; there's others."

The boys could now plainly see the shaggy forms of four or five buffaloes grazing a little distance apart, just as the train rounded a slight swell in the ground.

"We're now in the buffaler country an' ought ter see a lot of 'em," continued the trapper. "Them fellers yer see is prob'ly spies sent out ter watch fer trouble. A buffaler herd is a good deal like an army; it has its captains an' its ginerals an' its pickets. Buffaler are strange critters. They act most like human at times, an' then agin they hain't got a grain o' sense. Them fellers over thar'll likely take ter their heels afore long, when we git nearer, an' run right inter the middle of the herd and give the warnin'. Then the leaders 'll start off with the hull lot of 'em gallopin' arter, and jist like as not they'll run right inter danger, fer they're big fools thet way. They've

ginerally got a notion thet they must keep a-goin' straight ahead, an', instid of turnin' from the track whar their pursuers is goin', they'll keep straight on it er try ter cross it in front. I've seen a herd o' buffaler run ahead of a train fer miles, tryin' to outrun it, an' stick clost ter the track all ther way."

In a few moments more the train was within a short distance of the group of buffaloes, and the boys wondered that they did not become frightened.

"The wind's comin' this way," explained the trapper; "an' they hasn't scented us yit. Yer ken git close up ter a buffaler if the wind is off."

Just then the animals lifted their heads and gazed from side to side in a nervous way, so the boys had a good view of them. Their great shaggy heads were covered with matted hair, tangled and full of burrs, almost concealing their little horns and their eyes that seemed to stick out of the sides of their heads, so that, as Frank suggested, they could see both ways.

So near had the train now come to the animals that the boys were wild with suppressed excitement, and this was increased

when several short, sharp whistles from the engine startled the big beasts into a run, or rather a clumsy gallop. Sure enough, just as the trapper had said, they plunged off in a way parallel to the railroad track and in the same direction in which the train was going.

"I shouldn't wonder if we'd see some fun," suggested the trapper, with a significant movement of his arm, as if he was feeling to see that his "shootin' iron" was all right.

CHAPTER VII

Ned Kills a Buffalo

THE train had not gone far ere it had left the galloping buffaloes in the rear, but the wild, shrill whistles of the engine at short intervals, and the perceptible slowing up of the train, indicated trouble ahead. So intent were the boys on keeping the buffaloes in view that they scarcely noticed these signs of something unusual ahead.

"Youngsters, we've run down a herd o' buffaler, sure. 'Tain't often yer git this sport now. It use' ter be a few years ago thet yer couldn't cross these plains without runnin' inter a bunch o' them big fellers. Looks like we war in fer a race with 'em good and heavy."

The boys were on the tiptoe of excitement. Just to think of it, they had only been gone from home two or three days, and already had seen buffaloes and were about to have a race with a herd of them! Were ever boys so lucky? Each of them found a window that was unoccupied, and out of it stuck his head to get a good view of what was about to happen. Just ahead of the engine appeared the

rear guard of an immense herd of the shaggy-coated monarchs of the plain. The herd itself could be seen at a distance, evidently not yet fully aware of the approaching danger, for they had not started to run. The engine kept up its shrieking as it crept nearer and nearer the outskirts of the great mass. Now they were in the midst of them, and the whole pack of countless hundreds were lumbering along, bellowing with what seemed like a low, hoarse groan, and making a noise with their hoofs which sounded like the rumble of thunder heard above the rattle of the train. A great cloud of dust arose on all sides, almost blinding the sight. Strange to say, the entire herd were galloping along in the same direction with the train, pushing and jostling in their mad attempts to outrun the danger, carried by their foolish leaders right in the very way in which they should not go.

The boys found themselves in a seething, struggling mass that seemed to be closing in on them more and more every moment. Through the clouds of dust they could see distinctly the forms of the animals nearest them as they plunged along, pushing away as far as possible from the danger line, and be-

yond these, so far as the eye could reach, they beheld nothing but a black sea unlike anything that they had ever before looked upon.

There was the sudden crack of a breech-loader ahead, and Ned, whose head was out one of the forward windows of the coach, cried out: "Some one in the car ahead is shooting out the window! Don't you wish we had a gun?"

"I don't believe," said Jack, excitedly, "that a fellow could miss at this distance, no matter how bad a shot he might be," and just then a young buffalo threw his head in the air and pitched forward upon his knees. In an instant a score or more of big fellows stumbled over him and fell, some to catch themselves and go limping away, others to be trampled to death under the hoofs of the oncoming horde.

"Oh, isn't it awful!" exclaimed Frank, as another shot rang out, this time from a window of their own car, and then another and another, until it seemed as if the train were a moving arsenal.

"I don't like this at all," cried Frank. "It isn't hunting. It's more like murder."

"What's one buffalo more or less among these thousands? I wish I had a gun," said Jack.

"Wall, I guess yer ken git satisfaction ef yer really want it," said the trapper, accompanying his words with a quick movement toward his hip pocket. "Here's a feller as'll fetch 'em as good as a rifle," and with this he handed to Jack an ugly-looking pistol that had evidently seen considerable service. Jack for a moment almost regretted having expressed a wish for a gun, but now that he had one in his hands he was not going to show the white feather.

"Now, youngster, aim keerful. Fire at buffaler. You won't hit nothin' that way 'cept the ground. Up a little! That's it! Pint it at thet big feller comin' this way; he's nearest ter yer. Hit 'im in that little spot jest back of the shoulder. That's the place to git a buffaler."

Jack's hand trembled so he could hardly pull the trigger.

Bang!

Four heads peered out through the smoke and dust, but not a sign could be seen of a wounded or dead buffalo, and the big fellow was lumbering along as if nothing had happened.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the boys.

"Let me try it," said Ned, and by this time the train was going so slowly that the big fellow at whom Jack had shot was still opposite their window.

The trapper looked his weapon over, set the trigger, and handed it to Ned. Ned had scarcely taken it in his hand and turned its barrel toward the window than he had pulled the trigger, and again the boys were peering through the smoke to see what had happened.

"Ha! ha! ha!" and in the laugh that followed Jack's voice was the loudest. "Now let me try," said the trapper quietly, and taking the pistol in his hands he held it at arm's length for just a moment, then quietly withdrew his arm and almost rose from his seat as he said: "Youngster, look, you've got 'im. See, he's droppin' behind. He's stumblin'. Now he's up agin. Look out, ole feller, or you're done. There he goes! Give me your hand, youngster; you're a dead shot."

"Oh-h!" exclaimed Ned, scarcely above a whisper, his face suddenly growing pale. "I'm sorry I did it. He's a noble-looking fellow. He had just as much right to live as I have, and it was cowardly of me."

During all this excitement the train had

gradually slowed up and had now come to a standstill a few yards beyond the point where the big buffalo had dropped at Ned's shot, and over the body his fellows were tumbling in a mad rush.

"We're goin' to wait to let 'em pass," suggested the trapper.

"I wish," said Ned, "they had not stopped just here."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Jack in disgust, "I wish I'd killed him. I'd give anything to be able to write home that I hadn't been gone a week before I'd killed a buffalo."

"You'll have ter git over them sentimental feelin's if yer goin' ter see this country," said the trapper; "but let's git off till the train starts, an' see what you've got."

It was no sooner said than done, for the boys were anxious to get a near view of a bison; but they stood very near the train until the mad throng had somewhat thinned out, and then they cautiously approached the shapeless mass of shaggy heads, hoofs and horns that almost covered the big buffalo which Ned had brought down.

The boys were awed by the spectacle, and Ned could scarcely be prevailed on to do what

the other boys did with the aid of the trapper's hunting-knife, cut off some of the shaggy locks of the big fellow for a memento.

"I don't know," said Ned, "why I should feel this way, but I really feel like a coward. If the buffalo could have had a fair chance for his life I think I wouldn't feel so bad."

Jack broke into a laugh, and suggested that he thought the buffalo had more than a fair chance for his life with Ned holding the trigger, and he declared testily that he thought it was all luck anyway and that Ned needn't feel so bad about it; that he wasn't to be blamed for hitting something that he really didn't expect to hit.

As they clambered back into the train the old trapper said, putting his hand on Ned's shoulder: "I wish't more people had yer feelin's, youngster. Them buffaler used ter run these plains by the millions. They war masters then. Ther only foe war the Injuns an' the wolves, but the wolves didn't dare tech 'em 'til they got old and feeble, an' the Injuns didn't take enough of 'em to keep 'em from growin'. They killed 'em fer their hides fer their wigwams, an' fer their meat in the cold winter, an' arter they got that they let 'em

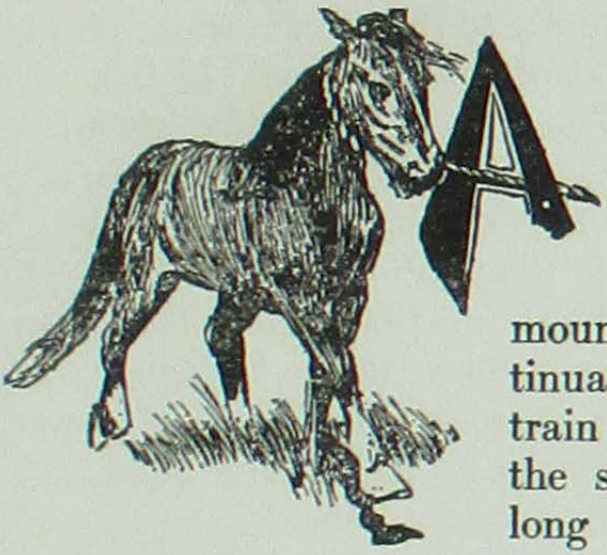
alone; but the travelers an' fortune hunters from the States has been killin' 'em for sport. There's been hundreds o' the poor critters give up their life today fer fear o' these keers. In a few years this noble critter will not be found in all this country, an' I don't know what the Injun will do without 'im, fer the buffaler is 'bout all he has to depend on fer grub an' shelter."

The sun had now set and the air was still. The train was speeding along amid the usual quiet and desolation of the prairies. Not a sign of life appeared, save here and there a single buffalo laboriously creeping along through the grass, while scattered about lay dead members of the great herd, singly and in groups, awaiting the crows and wolves, which, after feasting on the flesh of the dead animals, would leave the bones to whiten in the sun until time should crumble them back to earth.

The three boys fell into a sleep that night that was not altogether untroubled; but they wakened in the morning happy at the sight in the far distance of the low-lying foothills of the old Rockies with Pike's Peak standing sentinel over all.

CHAPTER VIII

The Corral



AFTER a few hours, which seemed endless to the impatient boys, now that the mountains were continually in view, the train pulled up at the station and the long journey by rail was at an end.

Mr. Sinclair was there to meet them, and his greeting was a hearty one. It did not take long, you may be sure, for Sinclair and the trapper to renew their acquaintance, and the reunion was a joyous one all around.

Mr. Sinclair had come up from "The Springs," by which name the region about the foot of Pike's Peak was generally known, to meet the boys. He had thought that Denver would be a good place at which to buy an outfit for the hunting trip which he had planned; then, too, he had determined that

after making his purchases he and the boys should return to "The Springs" by easy stages on horseback, so that the boys might accustom themselves gradually to rough life before plunging into the heart of the Rockies. In this way the boys would get needed practice at riding their horses, shooting at the smaller game, and sleeping hunter fashion under the open sky.

It took but a moment for Mr. Sinclair to tell the boys about his plan, after they were gathered in their room at the hotel; then, with one accord, they pounced upon the big trapper, who had accompanied them to the hotel, and begged that he go with them.

"Nothin' would please me better, youngsters," said he, "but I've got a job on hand fer nigh on a month back up in the hills fer the Government — doin' a little scoutin', so I can't go with you, much as I'd like it; but I ain't goin' to lose track o' you fellers now I've found yer," and as he said this he looked straight at Sinclair, "fer I've ben lookin' fer thet man high an' low fer years; I've got ter even up with 'im. I'll do it soon, too, er my name's not Jim Galloway."

"Suppose," suggested Mr. Sinclair, smiling, "that we set a time and place that will

suit us all and agree to meet for a big hunt together?"

The suggestion met with approval, the time and place were arranged, with the boys almost wild in their excitement over the prospect, for nothing could be a grander scheme for three boys than a season in the mountains with Robert Sinclair, the friend of the Indians, and Jim Galloway, the noted trapper and scout.

The following morning the big-hearted hunter rode away mounted on a hardy Mexican pony, fully equipped for what to the boys was some mysterious expedition for the Government. Mr. Sinclair and the boys were loath to see him go, and their last words to him as he rode away were, "Don't you forget;" and nobody could doubt, by the tone of his answer, but that he would be on hand at the appointed place and time.

Then the little company set to work getting together an outfit for their journey to the Pike's Peak region. The boys were a little disappointed to find that they were not on this first trip to really get into the mountains and that the trail lay along the foothills only.

But this feeling was soon over in the novel experience of getting together their equipment.

The first thing to do was to select their horses. Mr. Sinclair having made some inquiries, had learned that there was a ranch on the outskirts of the town where suitable horses could be obtained at a fair price; so as soon as the trapper had left the four made their way to the ranch, where they found a big collection of mules, broncos, and ponies which Ned declared to be the worst-looking lot of scrubs he had ever seen.

"Never you mind," said Mr. Sinclair, with a knowing shake of his head, "all things are not what they seem, and horses are no exception to the rule. You'll think differently about these scrubs after a while. You can't always tell about these homely critters 'till you've had a little experience with them. They're not beauties, but it isn't beauty you need in the mountains. You want a horse that's got sand and bottom. He's got to have muscles of iron. He must be able to stand fire, go without eating or drinking, jump ravines, swim rivers, climb mountains, stand rain or sunshine without complaining, and not lie down and get sick on your hands when you're miles away from camp, and may be running a race with a pack of wolves or a lot of unfriendly Indians."

This reassured the boys, and they set to work under Mr. Sinclair's guidance picking out their horses from among the motley crowd that were pushing one another about in a frightened way inside a big corral, or pen, into which the ranchman had led his four customers.

The ranchman was a rough-looking specimen, who looked more like a Mexican than an American with his immense sombrero and swarthy skin. The boys didn't like his looks, but they soon made up their minds that he knew his business — so much so that they lost all thought of his appearance in their admiration of his knowledge of horseflesh and skill in trading. He carried over his left arm several coils of rope, one end of which he held in his right hand, looped and ready for throwing.

Mr. Sinclair walked about the enclosure, scrutinizing with the eye of an expert each one of the excited group of horses, while the boys were quite satisfied with keeping as far away as possible from the heels of the struggling mass which seemed bent on kicking up as much dust in the enclosure as possible.

After a few minutes Mr. Sinclair called the attention of the ranchman to a tough-looking

bay, one of the biggest in the bunch. The ranchman took a step or two forward, swung the long loop a few times above his head and shot it out over the heads of the frightened animals. "Surely," thought the boys, "he can't in that way expect to get any particular horse in that jumble of heads." The loop caught on something; then bracing himself, the ranchman drew in the slack rope and, sure enough, out walked, as demurely as possible, the big bay. The ranchman put a halter on him, tied him outside the corral and returned, again deftly winding the rope into a coil.

Within a half hour four horses had been caught and a bargain had been struck. Mr. Sinclair took the bay, as he was the strongest and could best carry a man's weight, and to the three boys fell the task of choosing each his horse. There was nothing to do but draw lots, as from the three ugly-looking animals no one of the boys was able to make a selection. So it was in this way that Ned got a fiery little gray, Frank a sleepy-looking little animal that didn't appear to care what happened, and Jack a lanky fellow distinguished principally for long legs, prominent ribs, and scarcity of mane and tail. The boys laughed and joked one

another over their mounts, and forthwith christened them. Ned said that he guessed he'd call his "Snap," from a remark that Mr. Sinclair had made when the fellow was kicking and plunging under the lasso, "He's got snap in him." Frank named his "Sleepy Sam," and Jack thought "Spareribs" about the most appropriate name for his.

A little later Mr. Sinclair had bought saddles — the kind made of wood and leather, with a big horn in front and wooden stirrups — bridles, ropes, blankets, and a few cooking utensils. Some provisions in the way of corn-meal, bacon, coffee, etc., were added, and then came the buying of guns and ammunition and a rough suit of clothes for each of the boys.

The start was made from the ranch where they had bought their horses, and as they rode, single file, away from the ranchman's hut and waved "good-bye" to the swarthy Mexican, they made a queer-looking procession. In the lead rode Mr. Sinclair, gracefully astride his big bay, which the boys had named "Jim" after their friend the trapper, his fine athletic figure clothed in a suit of buckskin which had already seen some adventures, his rifle across the horn of his saddle, his belt decorated with

several good knives and a brace of trusty revolvers. A broad-brimmed hat, high boots, and a pair of shining spurs completed his outfit. As he turned in his saddle and waved his big hat in the breeze and shouted, "Forward, march" to the little company that trailed after him, the boys thought they never had seen a more splendid-looking man. They just couldn't help shouting, "Hurrah for Uncle Bob," for he had already been adopted as an uncle by each one of the boys.

The first thing Ned did in his excitement was to stick his spurs into the sides of his steed — an act of imprudence that cost him his seat. The pony didn't forget it for some minutes, and the boy made up his mind either to take off his spurs the next time he took a ride or keep them at a respectful distance from Snap's hide.

The boys were dressed very much like their leader, except that they each wore a good strong suit of blue-jeans instead of buckskin. Each wore a hat and belt and spurs, and carried weapons and ammunition. Indeed, they looked very much like frontiersmen, though any one could see with half an eye by the way the boys rode their nags that they were "greenies."

CHAPTER IX

The Start for the Mountains

THE little party had started from the ranch at daybreak, not so much because they wanted to cover a long distance on the first day, but because it is the style in the mountain country to get up early when there is anything to be done. Indeed, when night fell they had only ridden ten miles, but Frank said the tenth mile was longer than all the others put together.

As they rode away from the ranch they thought they had never looked upon so beautiful a scene as lay spread out before them. To be sure, they didn't have much time to discuss nature, for it was about all that the boys could do to hold on to the pommels of their big saddles and carry their guns, but they did not fail to see the undulating plain which stretched away to the left with its never-ending carpet of green, and to the right, away off on the horizon, the low-lying range of the Rockies with its dim suggestions of snowy tops, dark forests, and yawning chasms.

The trail lay over a hilly country dotted

here and there by great rocks that the boys could imagine some giants had rolled down from the distant mountains with which to play at marbles on the plain, and that tired of the sport the giants had gone away and left them. They crossed little valleys down which trickled mountain streams, and now and then ascended the tops of hills which, to the boys, seemed veritable mountains, but which were only ant hills as compared with the great peaks in the range beyond.

In their first day's travel they met with little adventure. True, Snap had given his rider some trouble and had once landed him on the ground all in a heap, and Frank had had excitement enough keeping Sleepy Sam from falling completely to sleep; but this was not exactly what the boys had pictured to themselves to be mountain life. Now and then, however, some small animal darted out from under the horses' feet, a prairie dog saucily barked from the door of his little hut, strange birds fluttered up from the sage brush and whirred off out of danger (but not before Mr. Sinclair had bagged three of them with his rifle for their evening meal), and ugly-looking snakes went squirming through the

grass, and once they thought they saw a coyote skulking along the base of a hill.

The sun was not very high when they halted in the shadow of a big boulder, turned their ponies out to graze, and stretched themselves on the ground for a good rest. Mr. Sinclair here gave the boys their first lesson in shooting. They were as green at this as they were at riding horses, but their teacher declared that he would have them hitting the bull's-eye before many days, for they were all boys of good nerve, quick of eye, and anxious to know how.

By the middle of the afternoon they struck camp and were again on the trail. The scenery was rapidly growing wilder and more to the boys' liking, but by sundown they had lost all interest in their surroundings and talked only of finding a good place to dismount and tie up for the night, for they were about as tired a company of boys as ever turned in. The hard saddles and the jolty gait of their horses had made the boys so lame they could scarcely get out of their saddles, and when they did so they had barely energy enough left to help Mr. Sinclair gather together dry grass and branches to make a fire for their evening meal. Soon, however, the coffee was steaming, and the

aroma from it and the frying bacon acted like a charm to drive away exhaustion.

It was indeed a happy little company that lounged about the camp that evening. As night fell they were stretched at full length upon the soft turf, each with his saddle and blanket for a pillow, and at a little distance the ponies quietly grazing.

"Just the time for a story, Uncle Bob," said Jack, when they had comfortably settled themselves.

"Very well; what shall it be?"

"An Indian story!" exclaimed the boys in chorus.

"Well, it shall be an Indian story, but you'll promise me that when I tell it you boys will go to sleep, for we must cover more miles tomorrow and be up before the sun. I will tell you a story that was told me by an old Indian some years ago. The raccoon by some Indian tribes is considered the mischief-maker among animals, and this story is about the raccoon.

"The relatives of two old blind Indians, wishing to move them from a place of danger, built for them a wigwam in a secluded spot near the bank of a lake, provided them with food, a kettle and a bowl, and left them there,

first stretching a line from the door of their wigwam to a post in the lake, so that the blind men could easily find the water by following the line. The two old men here took care of themselves. One of them would do the cooking one day and the other the next, and so on. They divided the work equally, and ate out of one bowl, each taking half.

"One day a raccoon which was looking for crawfish came to the line near where it was tied to the post, and, curious to know what it meant, determined to follow it up; so he followed it to the wigwam. Peeping in at the door he saw the two old men asleep on the floor, their heads toward the door and their feet to the fire. Sniffing about, he found there was something good to eat within, but he decided to retire and see what the men would do. Presently the old men awoke, and one said, 'My friend, I'm getting hungry; let us prepare some food.' 'Very well,' replied his companion, 'you go down to the lake and fetch some water while I get the fire started.'

"The raccoon, hearing the conversation, ran to the water, untied the line and carried the end to a clump of bushes, and there tied it. The old man stumbled along until he reached

the bush, where he began to dip his kettle upon the ground. Not finding any water, he slowly returned, and said to his companion, 'We shall surely die, because the lake is dried up and the bush is grown where we used to get water. What shall we do?'

"'That cannot be,' responded his companion, 'for we have not been asleep long enough for the bush to grow upon the lake bed. Let me go out to try if I cannot get some water.'

"Then the raccoon took the line back and tied it to the post, and the second old man, of course, got his pail full of water, and returning to the wigwam said: 'My friend, you told me what was not true; there is water enough, for here I have our kettle full.' The other old man wondered. Then the raccoon came in and awaited the cooking of the meal. When all was ready, the two old men sat down before their bowl, which contained eight pieces of meat — four for each of them. Each took a piece, and talked and laughed in their enjoyment. The raccoon then quietly took out of the bowl four pieces and began eating them with great relish. Presently one of the old men reached into the bowl and found only

two pieces left. 'My friend,' he said, 'you must be very hungry to eat so rapidly. I have had but one piece, and there are but two pieces left.'

"The other replied: 'I have not taken them, but suspect that you have eaten them yourself,' whereupon the other replied more angrily than before.

"Thus they argued, and the raccoon tapped each of them on the face. Then the old men began to fight, each thinking that the other had struck him, rolling over and over on the ground, upsetting the bowl and the kettle, and setting fire to the wigwam. The raccoon then snatched the two remaining pieces and ran out of the wigwam laughing, 'Ha! ha! ha! I have played a nice trick on you. You should not find fault with each other so hastily,' whereupon the old men ceased fighting and knew that they had been deceived."

When the story was ended the boys remained quiet for a moment; then Ned exclaimed rather disappointedly, "Uncle Bob, that's not an Indian story."

"Indeed it is; I heard it myself from the lips of an old Indian, years ago."

"I suppose," said Frank, "that he heard it from some white man."

"No," said Uncle Bob, "it is a real Indian story and the Indians have many such stories to tell. They believe most of their stories, too. I suppose hundreds of Indians — not Indian boys but grown-up Indians — believe the raccoon story to be true. The Indians have many stories that point good morals. White men mustn't think that they have all the good in themselves and that the Indian is all bad."

"Well, I supposed you were going to give us a hair-raiser," said Frank. "Somehow I can't think of an Indian without he's a regular devil in paint and feathers, and with scalps hanging around his belt."

"Well, my boy, you want to get over that feeling; and when you have been with me through the summer and fall, I will miss my guess if you do not go back to the States with a different idea of Indians. Now I'll fix the fire a bit, and then we'll spend our first night under the sky. I guess you'll not have any trouble getting to sleep after this hard day's jaunt;" so saying, Mr. Sinclair piled a fresh supply of branches on the dying embers, for

the night air was chilly under the mountains, then glanced out on the prairie to see that the horses were all right.

"Hello, how's this? Where's Snap? Confound that little vixen; he's taken 'French leave.'"

The boys were on their feet in an instant, and Ned was for putting off post haste on foot to follow his runaway.

"Here, lad, you stay right where you are. That horse is going back to the ranch, and probably's he's had an hour's start. You stay here and I'll fetch him."

In a moment Mr. Sinclair had bridled and saddled Jim, given him a few vigorous spurs, and was cantering at a lively pace back over the trail. He came up with the fiery little animal, about two miles from camp, leisurely trotting along with his trail rope dragging for yards behind him. As soon as Snap heard his pursuer coming he gave a jump and a kick and away he went. Now it was a pretty race. Two or three times the pursuer got close up to the runaway, and, as quick as a flash, had leaped from his horse to catch the end of the trail rope as it whizzed past, but each time he missed it. Jim was a good horse, but he had

a load to carry, and Snap was riderless, and what was more, he was frightened, so the race was an uneven one. At last Sinclair bethought himself of his lasso, which was securely tied to the horn of his saddle. Loosing it, he made ready to cast, and, driving his spurs smartly into his horse, he was soon alongside of the gray.

"Now I've got you, you rascal," he shouted, and "whiz" went the loop, but Snap heard it coming, jumped aside with the agility of a cat, and was off at right angles to the trail, up a little ravine that ran among the rocks. Quick as lightning Jim was brought to his haunches and was turned in hot pursuit up the ravine. Snap made a big mistake in his sudden resolve to leave the trail, for his new path was only the bed of a little stream, now run dry, which ended abruptly a hundred yards or more from the trail plump up against a big boulder. Here the little gray stopped stock still, palpitating like a scared rabbit, while Mr. Sinclair, coming suddenly upon him, took him captive and led him ingloriously back to camp.

The boys, of course, had not slept a wink, as minute after minute went by without the return of Mr. Sinclair. They then felt the

first sensations that come from being alone at night on the plains, and they were not entirely pleasant ones. They now heard noises they had never heard before — strange night birds, owls, wolves; and several times they thought they saw round burning eyes peering at them from out the darkness. Maybe they did. They were just in the right state of mind to see such things; and then, too, they were in the home of the wild beasts, and not far from the home of the Indian.

No telling what might have happened had not Mr. Sinclair, just in the nick of time, saved them from sheer panic by marching into camp with two rather dilapidated looking horses.

CHAPTER X

Frank's Pony Gets Him into Trouble

"GET up, boys; time for breakfast!" cried Sinclair, springing to his feet and shaking himself to throw off the numbness due to the chill air of the early morning. It was easier to say "get up" than to do it in the case of three boys who had slept, or rather tried to sleep, their first night on the bare ground, after the greater part of a day's ride on hard saddles strapped to the backs of half-broken mustangs. Their efforts to rise were ludicrous, and as each tried, in turn, the others let out whoops of laughter and made pointed comments on his poor success. Soon, however, they were racing to a little stream near by, and oh, how good the cold water from the heart of the mountains felt as they turned down their hunting shirts and threw it in double handfuls over their faces, necks, and chests! "Heroic treatment!" sputtered Frank, between splashes, to which there was a sympathetic echo from the others; but as the boys had seen Sinclair do it and heard him recommend it for health and safety, as well as for cleanliness, that was enough;

for they had determined to learn as speedily as possible how to live as hunters and were quick to follow the example of "Uncle Bob."

Then they built a rip-roaring fire, watered their ponies, and in an incredibly short time were squatted, Indian fashion, about a steaming pot of coffee, some savory bacon and good bread and butter, with appetites like prairie wolves.

"How do you like it, boys, as far as you have gone?" inquired Sinclair, when he saw from the satisfied expression on their faces that he was pretty sure of a favorable answer.

"Splendid!" "It's all right!" "It's just great!" came three voices in chorus.

"It'll grow on you, too," said Sinclair. "You'll get so you can't breathe in a house, and a bed will keep you awake all night; and as for eating, you boys'll be eating your shoe leather before long if I don't watch you.

"But we must be off! Fetch up the ponies, boys, and I'll pack up."

No captain ever had quicker obedience from his company. They sprang to their allotted duties and in a jiffy they were all "aboard," as Ned declared, sitting sidewise, and every other wise, on their saddles, to ease their sore

spots, and keeping up good courage by a running fire of good humor.

The morning was cool and bracing, the ponies in good fettle, and before they had gone a mile the young adventurers were racing down the trail on a dead gallop, leaving Sinclair to bring up the rear in a more dignified and orderly fashion.

"Good-by, fellows, I'm off up this hill for a view of the country!" shouted Frank, turning his horse smartly to the right and galloping away from the trail up a steep hillside.

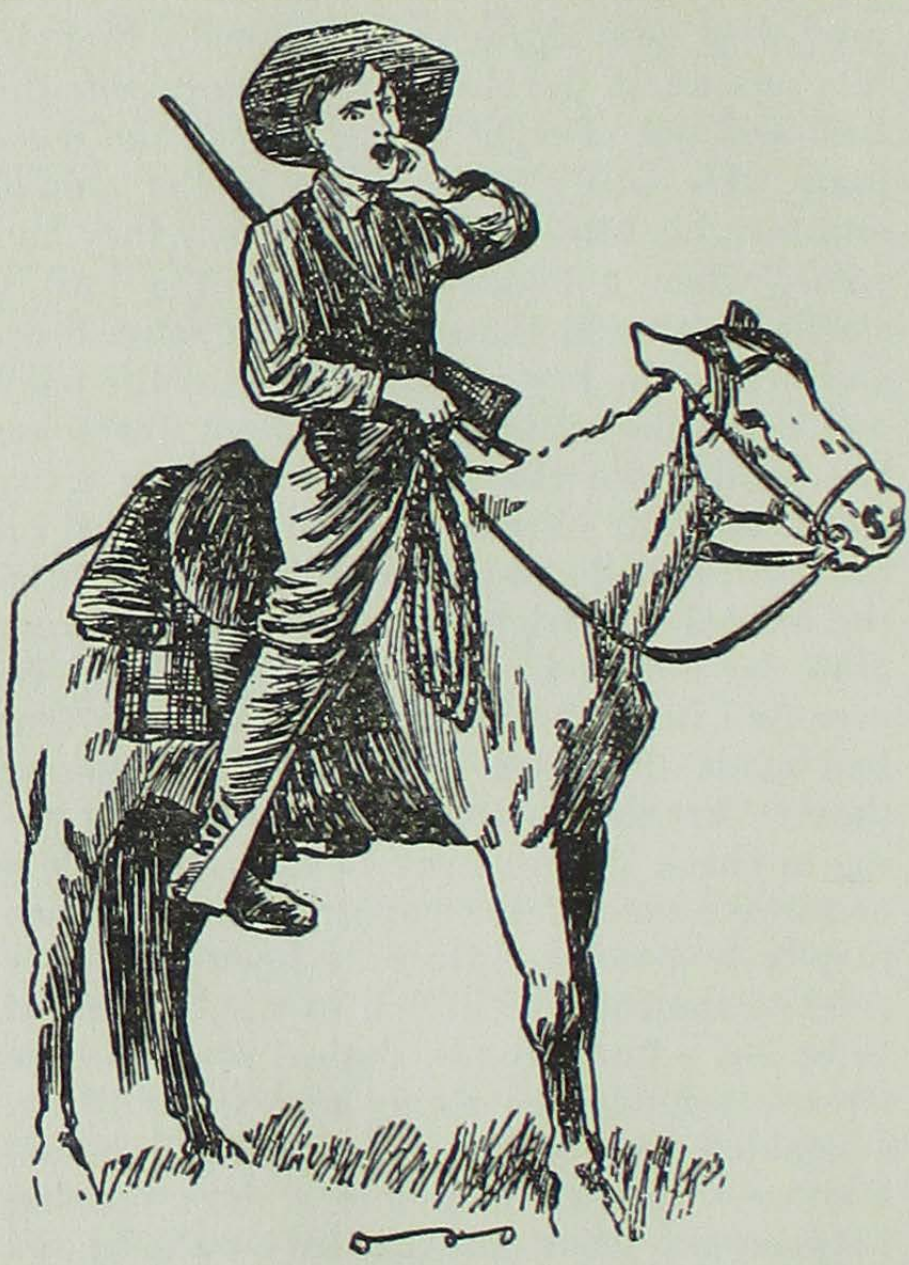
"Look out, now, young man, or you'll get lost!" shouted Sinclair. "Better save your wind; you may need it before night!"

"All right! I'll see you later!" came back the answer with a ring of boyish enthusiasm in it.

"That boy has got metal in him," thought Sinclair, as he spurred his horse into a trot to overtake the other boys, who were some distance ahead.

The hill was higher than it at first appeared to Frank, but he had started and he wasn't going to stop short of the top. After awhile the path became rough for the horse's feet, and the rider let him take his own way, which

proved to be a zigzag one that finally brought him around on the side of the hill opposite the trail and out of sight of the rest of the company. He was about to rein in the animal and turn his head back over the way they had come, when a sudden rustle in the bushes startled him and the pony at the same time, and before the boy could gather rein the pony had taken the bit in his mouth and was going like mad down the hill in a direction away from the trail. Frank shouted and sawed on the reins, pulled and pled, but it was of no use, the animal was frightened and bound to run. How far would he go? Where? Could he ever find his way back? Was the thing that had made the noise in the bushes following them? Frank was too much occupied in trying to check the runaway to look behind him or to take note of the country through which they were passing. He only knew that they reached the foot of the hill in what appeared to be but a few seconds, dashed across a little stream, sending the stones and water flying, scrambled up a bank and across a little mesa, and were now running into a dark opening between two great hills that led — who knows where! Up this ravine the crazy animal



" Uncle Bob ! Uncle Bob ! I'm here ! I'm lost ! "

dashed, with his head almost to the earth at every leap, until the path became so narrow that Frank felt that the mountains were closing in upon them and that they certainly would be swallowed up. Finally, however, the little animal stood, hot and trembling, under the shadow of a shelving rock in the very depths of a great canon.

CHAPTER XI

Lost in the Canon

FRANK threw himself from his horse, leaned his gun against a rock and sat down to rest his tired, jolted body, and collect his senses. Where in the world was he? In what direction was the trail? How far had he come? He had been so busy keeping his seat on the pony's back and pulling and hauling at the stubborn animal that he had taken very few observations of the way. He knew he had crossed a little stream and a long level tract of grass, plunged into a gulch, and finally came to this wild spot — high rocks all about him and just a patch of sky overhead.

The boy was not a coward, but never having been in the mountains before, the darkness and sense of loneliness oppressed him. "If I stay here long," he said to himself, after looking about a few minutes, "I'll be too scared to get out." Then turning to his horse, which was now complacently nibbling at the scant tufts of grass that grew between the rocks, he took some comfort in scolding him: "A nice sort of fellow you are to play me this trick!

Now, you'll just naturally show me the way back, and will do it in a hurry! If I get a chance to trade you for a jackknife I'll do it, and I hope you'll fall into the hands of a crazy Comanche who'll ride your legs off!" With this, Frank flung his gun to his shoulder and mounted. Turning his pony's head down the canon, he set off with just a little chuckle at the thought of his adventure and how he had got the start of his friends in seeing the mountains. Indeed, he half expected at every turn in the way to meet Uncle Bob and the boys, and he pictured to himself their white and anxious faces. As he rode along, however, his lightness of heart gradually gave way to anxiety and then to positive fear as he came upon one and another difficult place in the way which he could not for the life of him remember to have gone over before, and as he noted at several points that the canon branched out, making it well-nigh impossible for him to choose the direction with certainty. At such times, after dismounting and examining the rocks and the earth for footprints, he usually left the decision to the pony, trusting that the animal's instinct would lead him to take the right track.

At length Frank became almost certain that he was lost. At first he stopped only at long intervals when uncertain as to the way, but now every few steps he drew rein; but that was hardly necessary, for the pony seemed as uncertain as his master, and several times turned his head and looked into the boy's face with almost a human look, as if to say, "Master, we're lost! I'm sorry I did this! Now, what shall we do?" Finally, the young rider drew rein, turned his animal about and retraced his steps until another branching defile stared him in the face. The sun was evidently going down, for the gloom was increasing and there was a chill in the air. Then the boy stood up in his stirrups and shouted:

"Uncle Bob! Uncle Bob! I'm here! I'm lost. Hello! Hello!! Hello!!!"

The boy and the pony listened with intent ears, but nothing came back save the echo of the boy's own voice, weird and terrifying, from the cliffs above him.

Then it dawned upon Frank that he must spend a night alone in the canon; but he kept up his search until it was almost impossible for him to see his way, and only gave up when he stumbled upon a good place of shelter under

the shelf of a rock near which was a little stream. There was a suggestion of moisture in the air, and the boy, tying one end of the pony's rope to a young sapling so securely that the animal could not make a dash for home in the night without his master, set to work gathering grasses and twigs for a fire.

Luckily, on starting out, each of the boys had been equipped with a flint and steel for striking a fire and had had a little practice in using them, so after repeated attempts to light his fire he finally succeeded, and lay down beside it, under his rock roof, wrapped in his blanket, with his arms for a pillow. A boy might be excused for lying awake all night under such circumstances; but Frank was tired almost to the point of exhaustion, so when rain began to fall, as it did during the night, and something told him that the Indians would not likely be abroad at such a time, he just curled up before the warm fire, with his rifle by his side, closed his eyes and went to sleep. Several times during the night he was awakened by the uneasy movements of his pony; then he got up and replenished the fire, took a look at the pony to see that he was all right, and again curled himself up and fell asleep.

Early morning found him refreshed, but very sore from his hard riding of the day before, and when he saw that the rain had passed over and that there was a clear patch of blue in the sky he almost felt a joy in his surroundings. There seemed to be more life in the canon in the morning; birds were singing somewhere up the slopes and the rain had freshened the green, and, as he imagined, added volume and music to the little brook. Somehow he felt that he must find his friends that day, and he smiled with a little chuckle at the way the boys would listen to his adventure and how he would grow in their estimation.

But breakfast! he hadn't thought of that, and he was awfully hungry. A growing boy cannot go a whole day and night in mountain air without food and not be nearly starved. He hadn't seen a living thing in the dark canon the day before, save his pony and the grasses and trees up the slopes, and he couldn't eat them. But the pony was not so hard up. He was having the best kind of a time among the little patches of grass that the rain had freshened, and appeared to be perfectly satisfied with the situation. Frank looked helplessly about him. Here were his gun and his

knife and a fire, and even a few cooking utensils strapped to his saddle, but where was the something to cook?

Uncle Bob had undertaken to carry the provisions, and the boys had divided among them the other accoutrements of the march, but none of the things that had fallen to Frank were just what he wanted at this instant.

"Well, there is nothing to do but be my own provider," said he to himself. "One thing is sure, nothing is going to walk up and jump into my frying-pan. I may as well start out and get something, for if I don't I'll not have strength enough in another hour, the way my appetite's growing." So, shouldering his rifle, he struck off up the canon, stopping now and then to listen and look about him. He had gone nearly a mile on what appeared to be a fruitless search, and was about to set out on his return, considerably disheartened, when, peering around the corner of a big boulder that lay at the turn of his path he saw something that almost caused his heart to stop beating — a big buck deer, standing just beyond him on the brink of a little stream, from which the animal had just had his morning drink. "What a magnificent creature!" ex-

claimed Frank half aloud. The boy's hand shook as he set the trigger and cautiously laid the rifle barrel in a little angle in the rock and braced himself for a steady aim. His legs shook and his heart beat like a trip hammer, and — "bang!" The boy peered ahead through the smoke, and, to his bitter disappointment, the splendid creature was bounding up the bank and away. Boylike, Frank threw down his rifle and made a dash after him, hardly knowing why. He jumped into the stream, regardless of consequences to himself, and was just clambering up the opposite bank when, to his intense joy, he saw the stag totter and fall headlong — dead.

"Hurrah!" shouted the young hunter, "I've got him! I've got him!"

Caution gave place to enthusiasm, for without an instant's thought of what might happen if the animal should not prove to be dead, the boy rushed upon his fallen victim; but the proud fellow was really dead and there could be no danger.

"Now, what shall I do? I can't drag him home bodily, and I can't get help." How he did long to be able to carry away those splendid antlers! But even if he could succeed in re-

moving them, he was not certain that he could carry them. One thing he could do, however, he could cut with his hunting-knife some nice pieces from the flank — as much as he could well carry — and have something for a breakfast. This he did, and within an hour he was back at his camp enjoying his venison. He had no salt and pepper with which to season it; but what of that, he was as hungry as a bear and the meat was good and well cooked — that is, well for an amateur. Then there was enough left for his friends when he should find them later in the day.

Breakfast over, he gave his pony a good drink, saddled and bridled him, hung the unused portions of the deer to the saddle, bade farewell to his "canon hotel," as he called it, and was about to set foot in the stirrup when he heard the crackle of a branch just above him on the mountain side. Turning in the direction of the sound, he looked straight into two of the ugliest faces that he had ever seen, peering at him just over the edges of a rock.

CHAPTER XII

Captured by Indians

GETTING away was not to be thought of, so the boy just stood there almost paralyzed with fear at the sight of the two figures that now stood out in plain view before him. His first thought was of his rifle, but he was so unnerved he couldn't have lifted it had he tried; and then just as the Indians started to approach him the thought flashed over him that maybe they would prove friendly, and that his best plan would be to meet them as such; so he let the reins fall over his pony's neck, quickly dropped his rifle to the ground, and took several steps forward to meet his visitors. They evidently mistook his meaning, for,

though he was unarmed, the Indians at once stopped and fingered their weapons as if undecided as to the next best thing to do. At this Frank extended his right hand, all the time walking forward slowly. The two Indians then advanced cautiously. Attracted by a movement behind him, Frank cast a quick glance towards the pony, and found a third Indian holding the bridle and in the act of picking up the rifle.

"Surrounded, by Jove!" said Frank to himself. Then the two Indians, refusing his proffered handshake or not seeming to notice it, proceeded quickly and deftly to take away from him his revolver, ammunition, and hunting-knife, and then to bind his hands behind him with deer thongs. All the time they said nothing to one another and made not a sound save now and then a grunt, evidently an expression of satisfaction over the ease with which they had taken their prisoner.

Frank wondered if they knew any English, and tried, with what little breath his fright had left him, to make them understand. He said, slowly: "Trail;" "lost;" "friends;" "me friend;" "me pay money." But not a sign

of recognition came from the swarthy faces, excepting a stealthy glance or two. Frank noticed that the Indians didn't look him square in the face once. About the only sign they gave of being communicative was a shrug of their brawny shoulders and an ugly "Ugh." Then Frank thought to himself, "I'll repeat Uncle Bob's name. Maybe they know him and that will gain their friendship;" so just as the big fellow came alongside with the pony and the rifle Frank said, distinctly, "Robert Sinclair." They plainly showed they did not understand, and Frank's heart sank within him.

He was now placed in line with the three Indians, one ahead of him and two behind, and by a push was given to understand that he was to march — where, Frank hadn't the remotest idea; not that he hadn't time to think, for he really couldn't do much else; it was no use trying to talk, and the scenery didn't interest him much. Any motion that he made to leave the path made by the Indian ahead of him resulted in a chorus of "Ughs!" from the fellows behind him that boded no good. The Indian last on the line was leading the pony, and, so far as Frank could determine, the

On they went, till the poor boy was sick and faint.

animal was about as contented with his new master as with the old one.

Their way led for a short distance along the banks of the little stream and then struck off among the rocks. The boy had not walked much in the heavy boots that he wore; and while they served a good purpose to keep his feet from being cut on the jagged rocks, they tired and hurt him severely after the first half hour. The Indians, shod in their buckskin moccasins, seemed to just glide over the ground. Frank thought that he had never seen such easy, graceful movements; they reminded him of the movements of a cat, so still were they.

When they had reached a point near the top of the mountains, Frank could see for miles to the east and south, and he strained his eyes to see if at any place he could discover his friends, but to no avail; and in a few minutes they were over the crest and plunging down a zigzag path into what appeared to be a broad, fertile valley. Several times the pony slipped on the rolling stones, but the Indian who was leading him adroitly held him from rolling down the mountain. Frank himself took several tumbles, in one of which he bruised his elbow, for he couldn't protect himself by

his hands, which were tied behind him. He got no sympathy from his silent captors, who urged him on with grunts and grimaces and an occasional shove. At another fall he lost his hat and never found it again. He was now limping, his bruised elbow was bleeding, and his arms ached; but on and on they went with seemingly no lessening of their speed till the poor boy was sick and faint, and big lumps forced their way into his throat, which threatened to break out in sobs. But Frank was game. He didn't cry out; he just set his lips tight and kept on.

Finally they came to the foot of the mountain and entered a patch of timber; and here the walking was easier and the Indians seemed more indifferent to what he did. An occasional syllable passed between them, and Frank guessed they were nearing camp. He guessed aright; for in a few moments, through an opening in the trees, he saw a village of some two score of tepees made of buffalo hides with little rings of smoke rising from among them, and at a little distance off some ponies quietly grazing. The Indian just ahead of Frank gave a prolonged call that sounded fierce to the boy, whose nerves were already pretty

tightly strung, and then a motley crowd of dusky creatures came from the wigwams and from about the fires and rushed pellmell upon them, shouting, grimacing, talking, and gesticulating, and more than one of them brandishing bows and arrows and tomahawks and knives. Old warriors with seams of maybe an hundred winters on their faces, ugly and wicked-looking old squaws, young bucks — lithe limbed and many of them gaudily dressed, young squaws with papooses clinging to them, and Indian boys and girls with matted hair and tawny skin, almost without clothing, running about in great excitement or peering at the paleface from behind their mothers.

If Frank needed anything more to make him ill at ease this performance was enough. He felt at any moment that some of these savages would let fly an arrow or a tomahawk. Indeed, in the few minutes in which they were crossing the open space to the lodges he went through the torture of several killings at the hands of men and boys who danced about him aiming imaginary shots at him with bows and arrows and swinging their ugly tomahawks, as if to throw them.

They marched straight up to a wigwam,

which occupied a central position in the village, before which stood a stolid-looking Indian of splendid physique and really commanding presence. With him were several younger Indians. This little group seemed to be waiting for him. The three Indians began at once in Indian jargon to tell their story. It didn't take long, for Indians are not given to long speeches. The big fellow, whom Frank rightly suspected of being the Chief, said something apparently by way of giving directions, and one of the young Indians stepped quickly behind Frank and with a slash of his knife set the boy's hands free. Frank could almost have cried out with joy at even this much of a release, for his arms were bleeding from their bruises and the stiff thongs had cut through the outer skin in places. The Chief made a further motion, accompanied by a few syllables, and the door of a wigwam was opened and Frank was led in and made to sit on the ground. He didn't need a second invitation to do this, as his legs were trembling from weakness. Several Indians entered with him and sat down on the ground, their legs tucked under them.

"What next," thought Frank; "going to try

me, perhaps. There is one thing sure, I can't give any testimony, for there doesn't appear to be any interpreter in this court. I would just be satisfied for the present if they would give me a chance to lie down."

In a few minutes a wrinkled old squaw brought in a bowl of something hot and set it before him. Frank had some table manners, but without water, or fork, or knife, or spoon he didn't know how he could use them. Then he wondered if he ought to offer some of it to his silent hosts who were sitting about stolidly watching him. He was embarrassed; but thinking still that politeness was the best policy, he offered the bowl first to the Chief. That dignitary grunted, and indicated plainly his disapproval. Each Indian in turn did the same. Frank then dipped his fingers into the forbidding mess and transferred a little to his mouth. It was evidently some kind of a stew made from bear meat, but it didn't suit the taste even of a hungry boy. He wanted no more, and motioned to the squaw to take it away.

The Indians, who had lit their pipes, sat for what seemed to Frank hours, until finally tired nature won out and the boy lay down

with his head on his bruised arm. Then one by one the Indians withdrew. The old squaw replenished the fire, put a buffalo skin under the boy's head, and squatted down at the opposite side of the wigwam; and when Frank dropped off to sleep the two were alone and she was crooning a wild, weird chant that sounded like this:

"Na-nisa-naau, na-nisa-naau,
Wa-wan-a-dan-dia,
Wa-wan-a-dan-dia,
Na-nisa-naau, na-nisa-naau."

CHAPTER XIII

A Friend in Need

When Frank awoke the next morning he found himself alone in the tepee. The fire had died down to a few smouldering embers. He made a motion to throw into its ashes the ends of a few sticks that lay about, unburned, and scarcely had he done so ere the leather flap that served as a door parted and the wizened face of the old squaw peered in. On seeing her prisoner awake she entered stealthily, with a succession of unintelligible grunts which might have said, "Good morning," or "How are you?" had there been anybody to interpret them. She bore in her bony hands the same bowl that had served the night before, and this she placed before the boy with a gesture to signify that he was to eat. He was ravenously hungry, and the odor from the unsightly mess, though strange to him, was not displeasing. The squaw disappeared after setting down the bowl, and in a moment returned bearing a gourd of clear water, which he stood in sad need of, and a handful of wild berries. These she placed before him; and then throwing some

buffalo fat on the live embers, causing them to blaze up cheerfully, she squatted down opposite him on a pile of buffalo skins and gently rocked herself to and fro, all the time watching him closely through her little piercing eyes.

Frank would have been greatly annoyed at this, but something told him that the old squaw meant to be kind to him. He remembered how plaintive was the tone of her chant as it sounded in his ears just as he went to sleep the night before, and there was a sort of a rude delicacy about the way in which she served him. He made up his mind that the old squaw had lost some one whom she greatly mourned, a son, — perhaps, a young man about his age; and that she was doing her captive this kindness for the sake of the Indian boy.

While Frank was eating he became conscious that there was unusual excitement on the outside of the tepee. Indians and dogs were evidently running about, and by their whoops and yells arousing themselves to a state of frenzy.

Scarcely had he finished his rude breakfast before an ugly face looked in at him from under the leather flap. In a short time more faces appeared. At first they were the faces of

squaws and children only, but later the cruel visages of young bucks and old warriors completely filled the opening. As the excitement increased the old squaw became uneasy, and finally drawing close to him she took his hand in both her withered hands and looked long and silently into its palm, all the time crooning a strange song and rocking to and fro.

"What can it all mean?" thought Frank. "Is this the usual morning romp of an Indian village, or are they preparing for some unusual event?"

From the actions of the old squaw he could not help feeling that the latter was true. "Were they getting ready to kill him? Was this to be his last day, and would he never see his home and friends again?" The thought almost unnerved him. He tried to think of everything he had ever heard or read about how to make friends with Indians, but he didn't seem to remember a single thing that he could put to use. The Indians had taken from him everything he owned save his trousers and hunting shirt; even his boots and stockings were gone. A proud young warrior, if Frank could have seen him, was stalking about the village in them, followed by the admiring gaze

of half the squaw population. His jackknife, which his father had given him on his last birthday, and a few coins that he had carried in his pocket had been taken from him. Of course, his pony, bridle, weapons, and ammunition had gone first; so there was nothing he could offer in return for his freedom.

"Oh, if only Uncle Bob were here!" he exclaimed aloud.

The old squaw seemed to comprehend his fear. She rose from his side, and taking down a gourd which hung by a string of leather to one of the tent poles, she drew from its depths a piece of worn and dirty paper that looked as if it had been torn from a notebook and had been handled for a long time by dirty fingers. Gliding back to his side, she carefully unfolded it and held it at arm's length before his eyes, her own little black eyes, almost hidden in the stray locks of hair that fell over her forehead, fairly burning with earnestness.

All this time a dozen or more Indians, little and big, were peering in at the opening and the noise without was becoming an uproar.

Frank saw, to his surprise, on the greasy scrap of what was once white paper, the outline of an Indian pony, and astride its back

the figure of an Indian of superb physique and magnificent poise — a picture that no Indian could have sketched, and surely the work of an artist.

Frank almost trembled with joy.

"Who gave it to you?" he cried, almost springing to his feet and not realizing that he could expect no answer to the question.

The old squaw, burying her face in her hands, rocked to and fro, still clutching the dirty picture in her hands. Frank bent close over her, to see if perchance the scrap of paper bore any name that would connect it in any way with his uncle, Robert Sinclair, the Indian painter.

No! But what was this? Down in one corner, almost obliterated by the frequent handling, appeared a strange combination of letters, spelling,

"Ma-na-ne-ah."

"This means something," thought Frank; "probably it is the name of the young warrior that this old Indian woman is mourning over. Perhaps" — an inspiration came to him — "perhaps it's the Indian name of Uncle Bob. I'll see."

The faces were still peering in at the opening,

and the old squaw was still crooning her wild song.

"I'll see," said Frank. Then taking from the edge of the fire a small stick, which had been burned at one end so as to be like a chunk of charcoal, he drew with it a few lines on the sides of the tepee, picturing as well as he could the sharp outlines of Uncle Bob's clear-cut face, and turning, said aloud twice, so that the old squaw and those at the door could hear him, "Ma-na-ne-ah." At the same time he pointed, first away over the heads of those about him, as if to indicate something way beyond the mountains, and then pointed to himself.

The old squaw raised her eyes in surprise and wonder; then, bounding to her feet like a frightened deer, she scurried out of the tepee, and Frank was alone.

Had he failed to make her understand? Was he after all mistaken in thinking this was Uncle Bob's Indian name?

In a few moments the flap at the opening parted and three stalwart Indians crept in. They were decked out in paint and feathers as if for some important ceremony. Frank's heart sank within him as they motioned to

him to rise and leave the wigwam. As soon as he reached the open air he saw that the inhabitants of the entire village were gathered about him, all decked out and painted in their gaudiest colors. A wild shout went up as he appeared. It seemed to the boy that at any moment he would be caught by one of the hungry-looking dogs that barked at his heels, or be transfixed by an arrow or tomahawk, scores of which were leveled or brandished at him.

To his horror, Frank found that he was being led to the foot of a tree that stood just on the edge of the village, where two sinewy Indians stood awaiting them, holding in their hands several loops of leather cord. Reaching the tree, the three Indians turned him over to the two who had been waiting, and binding one cord about the boy's wrists, which were folded behind his back, wound the other one about his body in several places and passed it tightly around the tree. Then the Chief motioned to the crowd to fall back, and when there was some sort of order, he beckoned to five young Indian boys, who, with bows and arrows, took their stand before the crowd, side by side, facing Frank and at about one hundred

feet distant from him. The Chief then made a speech to the company, which, of course, Frank couldn't understand — and, indeed, it is doubtful if he could have understood it had it been in English, for everything about him was growing dim and uncertain.

When the Chief had finished there were shouts and grunts of approval. The Chief stepped back. Frank felt his senses deserting him; he could only realize that he was to be the target for the iron-pointed arrows of these fierce Indian boys for the sport of the village.

The boys drew their weapons.

By some strange impulse Frank gathered his whole strength and shouted at the top of his voice, "Ma-na-ne-ah!"

At this there came rushing out of the midst of the motley crowd, pushing and elbowing her way and screaming like a crazy woman, the old squaw who had been his keeper. At one bound almost she threw herself before the Indian boys; then gliding like a weird specter, her hair streaming and her arms spread above her head, and holding in her hand the dirty picture, she threw herself upon the boy with wild gesticulations, fairly hurling at the old Chief a torrent of words.

At this strange interruption the Chief stepped forward and the villagers crowded about, partly silent now but with some rumbling of murmurs and ugly "ughs."

The Chief thrust the squaw aside, and standing before his prisoner himself pronounced the strange name that had so excited the Indian woman. As he said it he pointed his long, gaunt arm to the southward beyond the mountains. Frank hurriedly repeated the name, and at the same time nodded his head to mean "Yes." The Chief spoke a few words to the crowd, and with a quick movement beckoned to the two Indians, and they, with some reluctance apparent on their faces and in their movements, cut the cords that bound the boy to the tree.

Frank had guessed right. The strange name he had seen on the picture was the Indian name of his uncle, Robert Sinclair, the artist friend of the Indians, and it had saved his life.

CHAPTER XIV

Frank Becomes an Indian

The Indians were now as friendly toward Frank as they before had been unfriendly. They vied with one another in their efforts to please the boy and atone for their intended cruelty. One by one the young warriors who had divided among themselves his belongings brought them to him, until he found himself in possession of his pony and even of his boots — the latter being restored with evident feelings of disappointment on the part of the dandified young buck who had been strutting about the camp in them, much to the gratification of his pride and the discomfort of his feet.

Frank soon found that his escape from death at the hands of the Indians did not mean his release and return to his friends; the Indians evidently had no such thing in mind. It was going to be a case of adoption, and his foster mother was to be the old squaw who had been the means of his deliverance. Her joy at the turn of affairs was manifest — not so much in her expressionless face as in the quickness of her movements and the incessant crooning of

weird songs that sounded like psalms of thanksgiving, very unlike the mournful tone of her chants of the night before.

The boy was led with much ceremony, followed by the entire village, to the tent of the old Chief, which he was bidden to enter. Then a half dozen of the older warriors, with their Chief, crept in and silently seated themselves in a circle; a long pipe was produced, lighted, and passed from one to another, each in his turn taking a few vigorous puffs. Frank found this a trying experience. The pipe and the smokers were none too clean, and the boy was not accustomed to the taste and smell of tobacco. He did not hesitate, however, to take the pipe and go through with the ordeal, for he recognized the act as one of courtesy and as indicating the friendly feelings back of it. Then a bowl of antelope meat was brought in and each Indian in turn, giving precedence to Frank, drew from it with his fingers a portion and transferred it to his mouth. Then there was more smoking, and the Chief stood up to talk. Frank would have given much to know what he said, but from the Indian's gestures and his occasional repetition of the word "Ma-na-ne-ah," he knew that Uncle Bob and

himself were the subjects of the discourse. Two or three other Indians followed, in short guttural responses, and Frank wondered if he was not listening to after-dinner speeches as eloquent as any the white man hears. Then the company lapsed into profound silence and finally broke up, the Indians quietly, one by one, withdrawing, until he was left alone with the old Chief. He was curious as to what was next to happen, but was not long in ignorance, for from beneath a pile of buffalo skins the Chief drew a collection of sketches, on each of which appeared the Indian name of Mr. Sinclair, and handed them, with evident concern for their safety, to the boy. Frank looked at each and nodded his approval and pleasure, and the old Indian grunted and grimaced. There were pictures of Indians on horseback decked in gaudy attire; strong-limbed young warriors astride untamed ponies dashing after a herd of buffaloes; old warriors sitting in solemn counsel smoking the pipe of peace; an Indian camp, depicting the domestic life of the red man; and one particularly striking sketch of an Indian boy taking his first lesson with bow and arrow.

Frank handed back the pictures to the Chief

with a smile and nod of recognition and gratitude, and then waited for the next move in this strange interview. The Chief quickly returned the sketches to their place, and then turning to a pile of buffalo robes he selected one of the best — that of a buffalo calf, with dark, well matted hair, soft and warm. With evident pleasure he laid it at the feet of his guest. Frank guessed instantly that it was as a present to him, and that the Chief had given him his choicest possession. Quick as his boy wits could work, he made up his mind to return the favor; so, taking out of his pocket several bright coins he held them out to the old warrior, whose eyes twinkled with delight.

Frank now knew that he had a friend on whom he could depend.

The Chief, after sitting for a long time smoking and gazing at the boy and turning over the pieces of metal that, bright and beautiful, lay in his dark, bony hand, finally stepped to the door of his wigwam and, ushering in an Indian youth, indicated that Frank was to follow him. The Indian boy was about eighteen years of age and Frank judged him to be a son of the Chief — and in this he was right. He was as straight as an arrow, and in his face

was a look that seemed to defy fear and yet was neither coarse nor cruel. His carriage was superb, and as Frank walked behind him from the old Chief's wigwam he envied the Indian's free and unfettered manner of life. He felt that in a contest with that sinewy fellow he would be a mere plaything. Frank determined at once to cultivate the friendship of the young Indian; and as they approached the wigwam which had been his prison of the night before, and from now on during their stay in these parts was to be his home, he slipped from his finger a ring, which he recalled he had traded a jackknife for one day in school, and handed it to his companion. The Indian boy's face lit up with an innocent expression of delight which seemed ill-befitting the savage blood in his veins, and Frank had made another friend.

They were now at the tent of the old squaw who was to be his Indian mother. She was an ugly, unkempt creature, but she had been kind and had saved his life, and that was enough to appeal to the boy's heart, so he was not sorry to find himself again in her hospitable home — rude and uncomfortable as it was. The old squaw had been making things com-

fortable for him. Buffalo robes had been carefully spread about a fire that burned briskly in the center, sending up a volume of smoke through the tiny hole at the apex of the tent roof. Spread out on one side was a motley array of Indian gewgaws and fantastic wearing apparel — moccasins, and feathers, and strings of beads made of the teeth of animals, braids of horsehair beautifully woven, several strong bows and an assortment of arrows, a lasso and several stone tomahawks, and some rude garments of skins.

Were all those trappings for him? The thought flashed through his mind that henceforth he was to be an Indian and that the old squaw had brought together this motley collection for him to wear. He was right, and, as he had started in to please these people and gain their friendship, he wisely made up his mind to do what was expected of him, so without much formality he began to don the Indian finery. The moccasins felt good to his feet, but as to the other things, he scarcely knew how to use them; and when he had succeeded, somewhat to the amusement of the Indian youth, in putting them on, he felt awkward and not a little confused.

The result was remarkable, however, on the Indian lad, for he at once signified a desire to parade the young man through the village; so, out they went, accompanied by the old squaw, who kept at a respectable distance, and in and out among the wigwams Frank was led — a sort of performance he did not relish — with eyes peeping at him from every side and a dozen or more young warriors bringing up the tail of the procession as a sort of guard of honor.

During that whole afternoon Frank was a target for observation and remark on the part of the village. If he mounted his pony to race with his supple young Indian friend, every young Indian did the same; if he tried to shoot with his bow and arrow at a mark, every Indian in the village looked to see how near he came to hitting a bull's-eye, and grunted his or her delight or disapproval at his varying success; if he ran a race with one of his young companions, the whole village came shouting after him.

When night came and he lay down on his bed of skins, he was so tired he fell asleep at once, but not without a homesick thought of his parents and his friends, and a big-sized wonder as to what was to become of him.

Then came dreams in which he became a great chief and marched all of his tribe back to the States and introduced them to his school friends; and just as he had accepted all of his old friends as members of his band and they were about to set off again for the hunting grounds of the West, his father appeared on the scene with a policeman, and he woke up to find it was morning and the whole Indian village astir with unusual noise and confusion.

CHAPTER XV

A Buffalo Hunt and an Escape

When Frank emerged from the tent he found the Indian women busily engaged, some in taking down the wigwams, others in gathering together their scanty effects and binding them upon the backs of their ponies, while children of all ages were running to and fro, playing with the dogs and dodging in and out amid the confused crowd of men, women and horses, shouting like the young savages that they were. The old Indians were standing in groups at a safe distance from the busy scene, or sitting singly, placidly smoking. One big fellow was standing over a squaw, shouting at her in a loud and rasping voice. The young Indians were astride their horses, riding like mad in a circle about the camp, brandishing their weapons as if in pursuit of an imaginary foe, their long hair streaming behind them and their nearly naked bodies glistening in the morning sunlight.

Frank saw that at their head rode his lithe companion of the day before, his body erect and motionless, his shapely legs clasping the

sides of his pony. The young Indian rode without saddle or bridle, and yet so much a part of the seemingly untamed animal was he that the two appeared animated by one spirit. A rabbit darted out from the sage brush as he passed, and quick as thought an arrow sped from the young warrior's bow. Inclining his body far over to the left the boy shouted to his pony, which turned with scarcely a perceptible checking of its speed, and then, with one hand grasping the long mane, the agile youth swung himself almost to the earth, and rising again as quick as a flash, held high in the air the victim of his deadly aim. Frank stood amazed at the exhibition of horsemanship no less than at the splendid picture of physical strength and grace.

The old squaw had prepared a breakfast for him. This he ate heartily, for he was becoming accustomed to Indian fare, while the squaw busied herself taking down the tent poles and strapping them upon the sides of a pony in such a way as to let one end of each pole drag behind the animal, making a sort of litter on which she piled her few belongings. Frank wondered if he ought to help her, but finally decided that old as she was she probably could

best do it alone; and, as he saw every other male inhabitant of the village taking his ease, he strolled out to get his pony, which had been hobbled not far distant from his lodging place.

Frank wondered what was the cause of the breaking up of the camp. Were the Indians going on the war path? Were they about to seek better grazing for their horses, or better hunting grounds, or were they afraid his friends might find him if they remained long in the neighborhood? He made up his mind to try to communicate with his young Indian friend and find out the meaning of it all; so, as soon as the camp was in motion, he rode up beside the youth and by signs succeeded in making known his perplexity. The young Indian was quick to grasp the situation, and, pointing to a rudely constructed figure of a buffalo marked in the flesh of his forearm, and drawing his bow as if to shoot, he conveyed the information that the camp was about to move into the buffalo country on a hunting expedition. The news half pleased the boy, though he realized that every step they took bore them farther away from his friends, who must by this time be searching the country for him.

The idea that he was to actually hunt buf-

faloes with a band of Indians was so much beyond anything of which he had ever dreamt, that he even dared to hope once or twice that his friends should not find him — at least until the adventure was over.

The camp on the march was a curious sight. The boy expected to see some sort of order kept, but there was absolutely none. The line of warriors, old and young, pack horses, squaws, children, and dogs straggled along until some were, it seemed to him, miles away before others, through feebleness or laziness, had started. The squaws walked, while their spouses rode. Some of the men and women, too old for walking, sat upon the queer drags drawn by the pack horses, and a score of papooses traveled in the same way, while here and there a puffy little red face looked out from a hole in its bandages from the side of a pack horse to which it was securely strapped.

The young men rode fiery young horses and spent the greater part of the time racing ahead, or plunging off to the side in pursuit of game that chanced to stray within view. The whole company pitched camp that night in a hollow near flowing water, and here, as at starting,

the women did the work, while the men sat about the fires and smoked.

The next morning early the camp was again on the march. As the sun approached the meridian, two riders, who had gone ahead as scouts, came galloping back signaling that buffaloes had been seen over the second rise of ground beyond. Immediately the line of march was turned, and a detour was made to bring it around so that the wind should blow away from the buffaloes toward the hunters, and thus not advise the animals of the impending attack.

A half hour later a camp was located and the squaws set to work putting up their tents, preparatory to the feast and celebration usual when the trophies of the chase were brought in. All the male Indians, young and old, gathered at the foot of the slope, a short distance beyond which it was reported there was a herd of buffaloes. On the march the most of the older Indians had ridden their poorer horses, leading their better ones. Now the poorer ones were turned over to the boys or to the squaws, and the hunters sat astride their better mounts, which were as impatient for the chase as were their riders.

Frank found himself, through the kindness of the Chief, mounted on an untamed tough little beast, without a saddle, and with a rude rope of leather for a bridle. He was afraid to refuse the proffer of a fresh pony, and he did not know how his own pony might act in the presence of buffaloes. He concluded he could trust the Indian pony to keep him out of danger, and he wasn't so sure of his own.

As he saw the Indians moving off in little squads up the slope, Frank began to grow excited. His Indian boy friend motioned for him to follow, and away they went at a swift canter straight ahead. At the top of the hill he expected to see game, but to his disappointment all he could see was little, swift-moving spots of color made by the Indians riding swiftly through the grass. On they went, saying not a word, every rider swaying to the motion of his animal and every eye fixed ahead. The boy felt the spirit of the occasion, and his heart fairly leaped into his mouth as beyond a low knoll, upon the brow of which he had just drawn rein, he saw a few old bulls scampering out of harm's way. Pushing ahead and keeping up as best he could with his daring companions, he in a few moments noticed, at a point

beyond, the waving of blankets, which he judged to be the signal that they were in the neighborhood of the herd. Soon the entire band was in a dense crowd, riding like the wind, but finally they separated, nearly half of the number riding away to the right as if to make a circuit and come upon the game from the other side, while the remainder halted. The halt was but for a few minutes, to allow those who had left to reach their point of attack, and then the horses were set again in motion up a slight rise of ground, and a moment later all stood looking down into a little valley, where a sight met Frank's eyes which caused him for a moment to lose heart. Before him appeared a dense mass of moving objects that seemed to have no end or beginning. And this little band of horsemen were to charge directly into it — perhaps be trampled to death by it!

The boy at once determined that he would remain at a safe distance and watch the chase from the high ground where he now stood; but scarcely had he formed the resolution ere a shout of defiance rang out on the air, every horse gave a bound, and amid a cloud of dust that whirled up from the animals' hoofs the

excited hunters rushed directly upon the solid phalanx of shaggy forms.

Frank's horse proved to be a perfect demon; it threw its head toward the earth and galloped like mad, while its rider was as powerless to direct or control it as if he had been a fly upon the animal's back. Almost in the same instant with the shout of his companions, an echoing shout came from the other side of the valley, and the poor beasts were between two fires. They broke at once and ran singly, or in twos and threes, but the greater part in a confused mass, while the wiry little horses dodged in and out among them, barely escaping a goring at every turn, and arrows flew thick and fast. It seemed to Frank's excited vision that every arrow went straight to the mark, as one by one he saw buffalo cows drop or go tottering away, bellowing with pain, to die in some out of the way place. The dust was stifling, and the noise of the bellowing bulls and the shouts of the Indians made the scene a veritable pandemonium.

Frank's practice with bow and arrow had not been sufficient to give him confidence in these weapons, so throwing away his bow he grasped his gun, and, selecting a big fellow

that was somewhat separated from the rest, he gave chase. For several hundred feet his pony gained on his awkward prey, and finally coming abreast with the animal the boy took as good aim as his unsteady position permitted, and fired. The bull shook its great head, bellowing defiance, and turned upon the pony that had now come up alongside; at once both rider and horse seemed to realize their danger, for the latter jumped like a frightened rabbit at the charge of the great shaggy monster, and then began a race for life. The boy's gun was now useless, for it was all he could do to hang on to the mane of the frightened pony. Leaning over the neck of the animal he called to it to go; he pleaded with it, then shouted and dug his moccasined feet into the animal's sides; but do what he could, the tired horse was losing ground, and Frank had almost given himself up for lost when suddenly a ravine opened before them. Down this they plunged, the maddened brute following. Across its stony bottom they rushed, and then with one wild plunge the gallant little horse threw itself against the steep bank on the other side. Frank urged the animal with all the strength he could command. The horse slipped — it

had not reached the top — it was falling back — then a shot rang out on the air, and horse and rider lay bruised and bleeding under the bank. Almost upon them lay the buffalo, dead.

A white man bent over the boy to revive him. Frank opened his eyes and smiled, while his lips repeated the words, "Uncle Bob."

"Yes, my boy, Uncle Bob, and you are safe. The next time you go buffalo hunting you will go with me."

CHAPTER XVI

Explanations

FRANK had only been a little stunned by his fall and in a few moments was, as he declared, "as good as new." His pony stood at a little distance, seemingly quite dejected at the poor showing he had made in the hunt, while all doubled up in a heap the dead buffalo lay where it had fallen victim to the deadly aim of the white man's rifle.

Hardly had the boy time to regain his feet and express his surprise at seeing Mr. Sinclair, before Ned and Jack came galloping up, their faces fairly beaming with joy at the sight of Frank safe and sound, for they had seen at a distance the peril he was in and had followed Mr. Sinclair to the rescue as fast as their ponies could carry them.

"Well, here he is, boys," said Mr. Sinclair with a mock display of sternness; "thought he'd turn Indian and get away from us. He has even thrown away his good clothes and taken to moccasins and feathers."

"But I had to do it to please the Indians," remonstrated the boy.

"Oh, that's very good! Ha! ha! And where is Sleepy Sam?"

Frank explained that he had left his horse in camp and taken a buffalo hunter, instead, on the advice of the Indians.

"And how do you like the trade? The animal didn't seem to be hunting buffaloes when I saw him scampering over this bank with that bull in hot pursuit. I think you had better stick to us, hereafter, and not go roaming around hunting Indians, and adopting their clothes and swapping horses with them. Now, let us get back to somewhere and rest a bit, for we three need it after chasing you up and down these mountain passes; then you can tell how you got away from us so nicely."

Then all four mounted their horses and, turning in the direction of the Indian camp, they rode away at a canter.

Away off on the horizon rose a great cloud of dust, showing that the chase was still on, while here and there, dotting the prairie, were the shaggy forms of the victims, some motionless, others standing as if in defiance of mortal wounds, and others lumbering heavily through the grass, tossing their heads and bellowing with pain, two,

three, a half dozen arrows bristling from their backs and sides.

The boys were not pleased with the spectacle, as they saw the suffering of the poor beasts, and even the excuse that the hides of the animals were needed by the Indians for tent covering and blankets for the winter and the flesh for food, scarcely satisfied them that the ruthless sport was necessary or justifiable. At any rate, they were glad to be out of sight of it, as they were soon, and to be seated about the foot of a great tree in the camp, amid the women, children, dogs, and superannuated old Indian warriors — too old to follow the chase — telling one another of the adventures of the days which seemed weeks since Frank had so suddenly disappeared from the Pike's Peak trail.

Frank, of course, had to relate his story first, and every incident of it sounded like a romance to Ned and Jack, who could scarcely help wishing that they had been in Frank's place — excepting, of course, at that exciting moment when he was bound to the tree and about to be used as a mark for the arrows of the Indian boys.

Then Uncle Bob related how he and the

two boys had succeeded in following Frank and finally rescuing him.

"When I saw you galloping away from the trail that day," he began, "I had a misgiving that something was about to happen. We fellows in the mountains have strange presentiments and go a good deal on signs and omens. Of course, I didn't know what was coming, nor did I say anything, but when I saw you gallop up the hill I somehow felt something was going to happen to you and, as you will remember, I called to you to be careful. So, when you disappeared around the hill, I stopped a while to await your return, expecting to see you every minute. You did not come; so I called to Ned and Jack, who were riding off ahead, but they did not hear me; for, as bad luck would have it, just then they had set off racing their horses and were soon out of hearing. I fired my rifle, thinking that would attract the attention of all three of you, but Jack and Ned kept on racing down the trail and no sign of Frank appeared. For a minute I didn't know what to do; then I put spurs to my horse and made up the hill after Frank. Imagine my surprise when I reached the summit to find him gone and no trace of

him to be seen. I knew it was useless to think of setting off alone haphazard to find Frank and leave Jack and Ned to take care of themselves, so I put about and rode fast down the trail. By this time these youngsters had stopped racing and could hear a shot from my rifle; so, in a few minutes, they were with me and I had hurriedly explained the situation. There was nothing to do but to return to the spot where I had last seen the runaway and examine the ground for footprints and signs of the direction Sleepy Sam had taken. This all took time, though at first the trick was easy enough. I could see where the pony had jumped aside, then follow his long, swinging strides down the slope to the creek bed and up its sides toward the mouth of the canon. Two or three times we missed the trail, but again found it, then coming to the hard, beaten bed of the canon, we found ourselves perplexed beyond measure. I am sure it was at the first branching off of the canon that we lost the trail, for here there was absolutely not a scratch or a broken twig to give us the direction. We fired our guns at intervals, climbed every point of vantage, built fires at night, but it was all to no purpose. The boy had dis-

appeared as suddenly and completely as if the earth had opened, swallowed him and closed again. Finally, the next day, Ned came running to me very much excited, exclaiming that he had found the carcass of a deer and near it boot marks in the soft earth. And sure enough, there were footprints not many hours old and easily traced. We found your camping-out place that first night and unmistakable evidence that you had been there. We found, by searching, where you had taken an obscure path up the mountain with Sleepy Sam, and I knew at once that you did not take that path of your own choice, but that you had companions, whom I knew by my understanding of the Indian nature were Indians. We were now in hot pursuit and not much over a day behind you. We reached the Indian village just after it had started for the buffalo grounds, and from that time on it was an easy matter to reach you. We came upon this camp a few hours ago, learned from the old men that you were with the hunters, and at once started in pursuit. No sooner had we come in sight of the game than we spied you running a race with a mad buffalo and there was nothing left for me to do but join in the race and save your life."

Mr. Sinclair looked very earnest as he closed his narrative — so earnest that tears came into Frank's eyes, and as he arose to his feet, for the hunters were now returning laden with their spoils, he took Mr. Sinclair by the hand and said with emotion:

"And I will not forget that you did all this for me, Uncle Bob. I am only a boy, but maybe a boy can be of service to you some day. Indeed, I hope so."

CHAPTER XVII

A Mother Bear and Her Cubs

The Indians manifested their pleasure at seeing Mr. Sinclair by a chorus of grunts and ejaculations and, as he could speak their language enough to be understood, there was no time lost in their comprehending the situation and agreeing that Frank should go away with his white friends, though his foster mother was evidently greatly grieved at the loss of her new son. Mr. Sinclair, however, appeased her with gifts and she soon became reconciled.

After a day spent in watching the Indians preparing the hides and flesh of the animals they had killed, and in celebrating with them the success of the chase by feasting, Mr. Sinclair and the three boys rode out of camp to resume their journey to Pike's Peak which had been so strangely interrupted.

Mr. Sinclair proposed that instead of going back to the trail they had originally chosen they should follow one of the mountain trails which, while it would be a little slower, yet would be more full of interest. This, of course, was readily agreed to by the boys.

Their path at first lay back over the way they had come. For several hours they rode on together, looking out for small game and chatting over the incidents of the few days that had passed since they left Denver, when suddenly Mr. Sinclair, who had ridden a few yards away from the trail to where two days before he had shot down a big elk, called to the boys and beckoned them to him. When they had come up they found him examining the ground, evidently in search of tracks.

"What is it, Uncle Bob?" asked Ned.

"Uncle Ephraim has been here or I don't know a bear's tracks. See here," and he pointed to great depressions in the soft, mossy earth that looked like the marks of a giant's foot.

"Who's Uncle Ephraim?" asked the boys in a chorus.

"Oh, that's a name the old hunters give the grizzly, out of respect for him, I suppose. That fellow was here last night making a meal off my elk, and either being frightened away or satisfied with what he got he has left a part of the carcass and gone off to take a doze. Now I have a plan to propose. Let us follow up his lordship or my lady, whichever the

brute may be, and surprise him by a morning call. He's not expecting us, but we'll make ourselves at home, just the same."

"Good!" cried the boys. "A regular bear hunt! What fun!"

"But some one must remain with the horses," said Uncle Bob, "and as Frank has had enough of adventure for a while we will leave him here. Now, don't go playing Indian again, but stay until we return, in perhaps an hour or so."

Frank obeyed with some reluctance, and, hobbling the horses, he turned them out to grass while he threw himself down beside his gun at the foot of a tree, prepared to make the best of his enforced idleness.

Uncle Bob, with Ned and Jack, took up the trail into the underbrush. For nearly an hour they pushed ahead up the side of the mountain, over fallen logs and around great boulders, sometimes guided only by slight scratches on the stones, or broken or twisted branches, which showed the way to the grizzly's den. Mr. Sinclair was in the lead, his rifle in readiness, and his keen, practiced eyes and ears alert. Suddenly, just as he was about to step over a fallen log, he stopped and, turning half

around, motioned to the boys to halt. They listened. "Hear that?" he asked in a hurried whisper. The boys heard nothing but their own hearts beating against their breasts.

"What is it?" called Jack in a stage whisper, full of fear.

"Cubs," answered Uncle Bob, "and they are just over there, not ten paces away, in that clump of bushes. Look out — the mother is probably with them and like as not the old man's not far away. Now, we're in for it. A grizzly will run if he has a chance, but we have him here at close range and then, too, that mother is not going to leave her cubs. You boys fire only when I tell you. One of you get on this tree and crawl up as far as you can and wait." And at that Jack mounted the fallen tree, and on all fours crawled as noiselessly as possible up its inclined trunk.

"You, Ned, go back a ways and take position behind a tree and don't show yourself till I call. I will get around on the other side of the nest and we'll have the family surrounded. Now, don't stir till I call, then be ready for business. Mind, now, if you must fire, hit between the eyes. The brain of a grizzly is as big nearly as an oyster-can, and just think you

are shooting at a tin can and you are all right. Good-bye. Now, be careful."

In a few minutes Mr. Sinclair had crept noiselessly out of sight and the two boys held their stations, breathless.

Soon they heard the crackling of dry twigs and a loud "ha, ha," and, looking in the direction of the sound, they beheld Uncle Bob approaching them holding in his arms two big, squirming balls of fur, looking like big Newfoundland pups, only heavier — two baby bears but a few days or weeks old at the most.

"The old folks are not at home, boys, so we'll take the babies."

The boys scrambled from their positions and in a twinkle were examining the little, clumsy bear babies.

"Beauties, aren't they?" said Jack.

"Yes, but dangerous beauties, for if father and mother bear catch us kidnapping their children there will be the greatest kind of trouble around here," and hardly had Mr. Sinclair uttered these words than a fierce growl from the direction of the nest showed that some one was now at home.

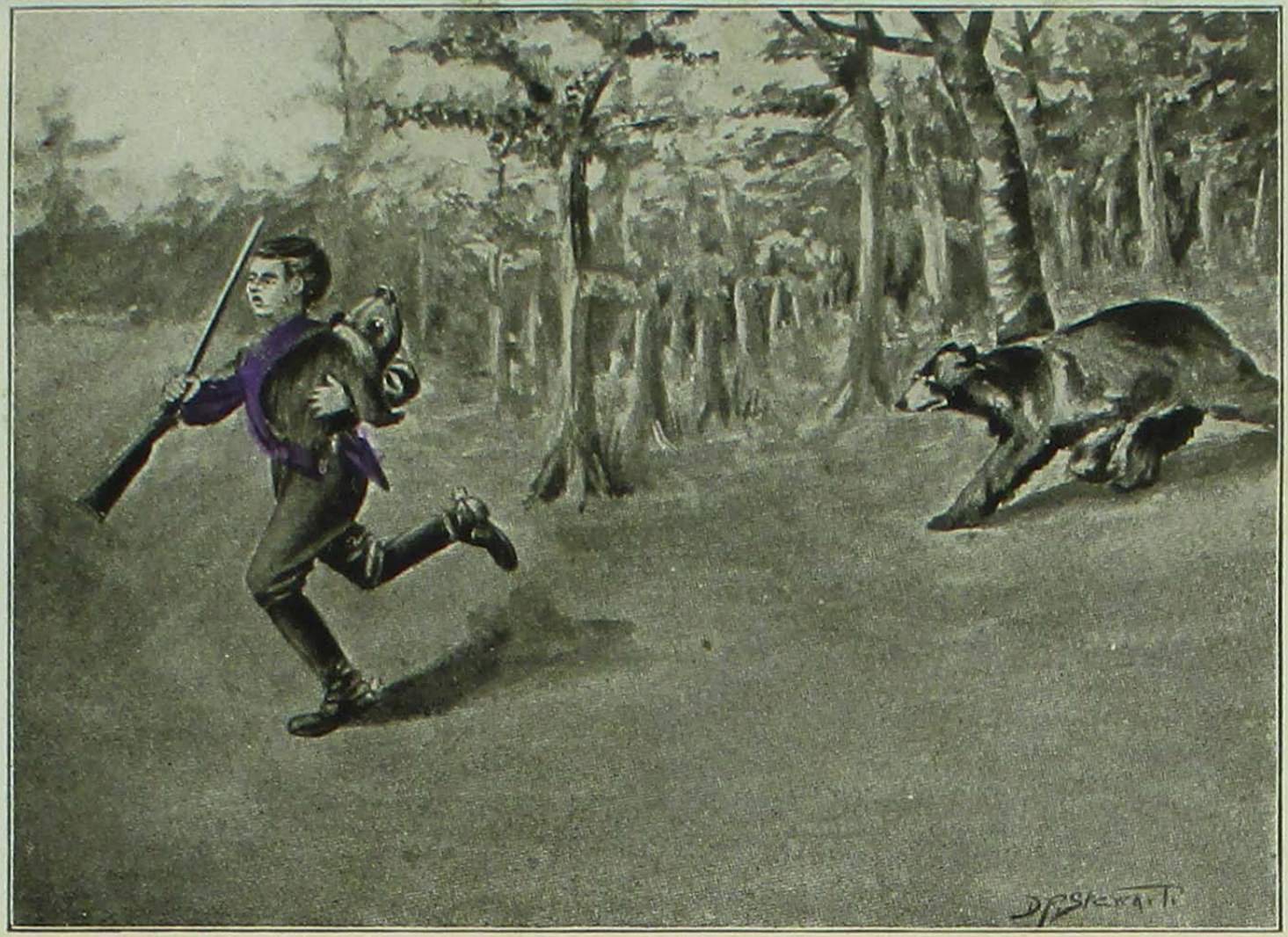
At this the cubs set up a cry that was pitiful

at the same time terrifying to the two boys, and in an instant the great shaggy beast burst into full view a few yards away.

"Run, boys," cried Uncle Bob, as bruin rushed toward them with a speed that was wonderful for so clumsy and heavy an animal. Each of the boys held one of the cubs as he ran. Mr. Sinclair jumped behind a stump and, as the beast came on, fired — but the ball went wide. Down the mountain the animal tore after the boys, the cubs all the time crying and the boys holding on to them with grim defiance, confident that Uncle Bob would shoot the bear, and they would escape with their precious prizes.

In an instant Mr. Sinclair was in hot pursuit. A shot from the rear could do little damage, but he hoped to thus divert the animal's attention, but two shots had no effect except to wound the animal and seemingly increase her rage. She was gaining rapidly on Ned, who was not so fast as Jack, having some trouble carrying his rifle and big, squirming bundle.

"Drop the cub!" shouted Mr. Sinclair, and Ned did so just in time, for the mother bear was at his heels.



She was gaining rapidly on Ned.

Mr. Sinclair stopped and, posting himself behind a tree, watched developments.

The poor creature was evidently now in trouble. For a moment she stopped to fondle the youngster she had recovered, and then, hearing the cries of the other, she answered with a fierce growl and set off again in hot pursuit.

Here was Uncle Bob's opportunity, for, rushing forward, he caught up the youngster, whose cries, reaching the ears of its mother, brought her again to a standstill.

The poor thing now raised herself on her haunches and, throwing her shaggy head from side to side, became the very picture of despair.

Shall I say that Uncle Bob did what all hunters do in stories of mountain life — shot the beast as she stood there distracted — or shall I tell the truth? The latter must do, though it may spoil the story for some. The man put the cub on the ground, knelt, took steady aim at the animal — lowered his rifle, and, turning, walked away, giving the mother a wide berth, and in a half hour joined the boys, who had put nearly a mile between them and the grizzly, told them his experience, and counseled that after showing the cub to Frank they

leave it with the elk carcass, where its mother could surely find it, and then go on their way.

The boys were at first disappointed in the tame outcome of their first bear hunt, but as they thought it over afterwards they were perfectly satisfied.

But this was not the only bear hunt they had in the mountains, as we shall see.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Death of "Spareribs"

For several days after the events narrated in the preceding chapter nothing unusual occurred in the lives of the three boys. By easy stages they followed the mountain trail toward Pike's Peak, enjoying every inch of the way but keeping well together and running no further risks of accident and delay such as had already made their journey much longer than they had expected it would be. They had at the start planned to be at the home of Mr. Sinclair, in the shadow of the big mountain, in three or four days at the outside, and they had now been nearly two weeks on the way and had still some distance to go; but they were enjoying it, getting muscles like iron, faces and hands as brown as an Indian's, and appetites that could scarcely await the signal to pitch camp and "take grub."

They had become hardened to the saddle, and felt at home on the back of a bucking pony. It was no trick at all for any one of the three to draw rein, jerk his gun to his shoulder, and bring down a bird on the wing,

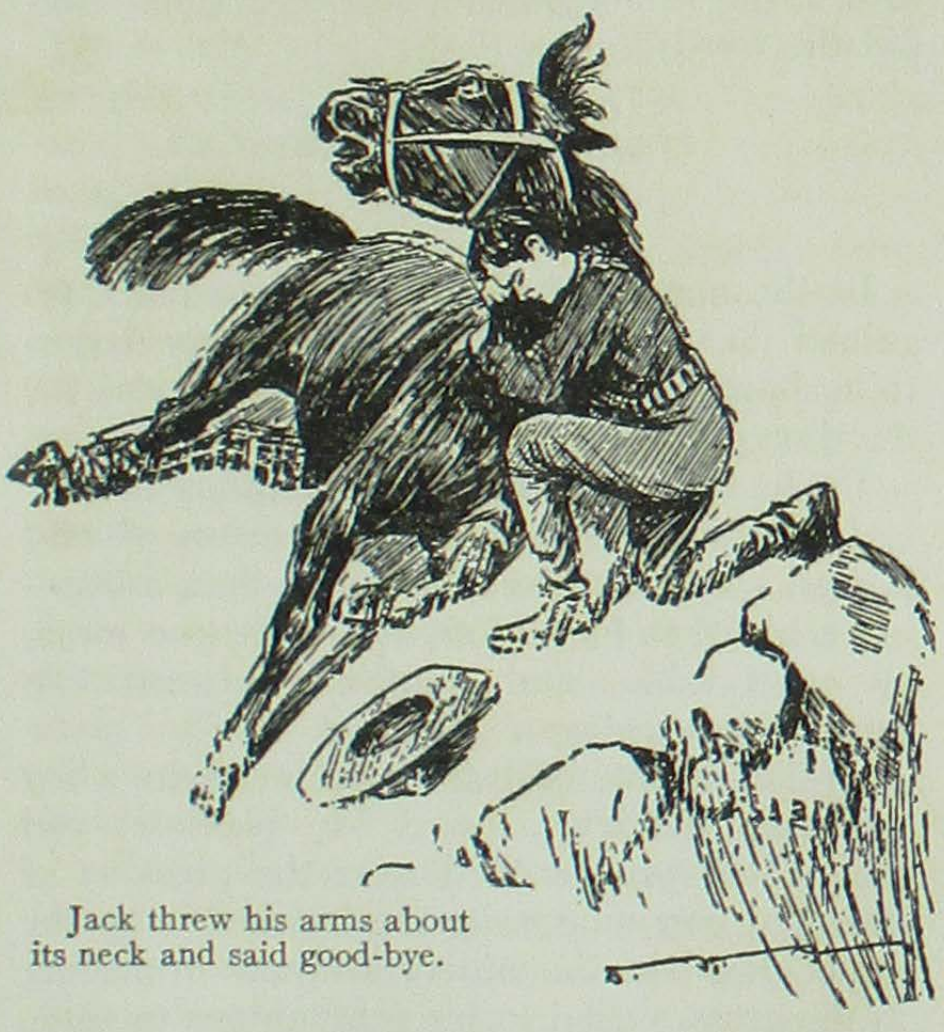
or put a quietus on a jack-rabbit that, frightened from cover, was making a streak across the path.

One thing of somewhat serious interest happened several days after the little company had the experience with the bears: Jack's pony was bitten by a rattlesnake. The poor beast soon began to show the effects of the poison, and with all the poulticing and careful handling that Uncle Bob could give it, matters grew worse until it was evident the animal could go no farther and that it must be shot.

Jack was heartbroken, for "Spareribs" was a good horse, and being the first one Jack had ever owned he had come to love it, ugly though it was; so when the moment came to put an end to its suffering, Jack threw his arms about its neck and said good-bye as if he were talking to a human being, and then arose, turned his back, and ran out of the camp as fast as he could, so as not to hear or see when Uncle Bob ended the poor animal's misery.

With but three horses for four persons and a lot of baggage, the little party found itself in an unfortunate situation. The only thing to do was for each one to take a turn at walking,

for on the rough and uncertain path up and down the sides of the mountains and along



Jack threw his arms about its neck and said good-bye.

rocky ravines, the burden of two riders on one beast was too great.

After the well-aimed bullet of Uncle Bob's gun had done its work, the boys rolled a big rock to the animal's head, and on it Uncle Bob put the words,

OUR FRIEND —
"SPARERIBS,"
A GOOD PONY.

In the course of the day the company regained its usual good spirits, and then something happened that threw everything else for the time out of mind.

Uncle Bob said he saw indications in several places of the presence of a drove of wild horses. The travelers were just then ascending a hill that formed an approach to a mesa, or open table land, nestling between two ranges of mountains.

"Like as not we'll see a lot of them when we reach the level," said Mr. Sinclair; and soon Jack, who, excited over the prospect of getting a new mount, having hurried on up the slope ahead of the others and was crouching in the grass, called to his companions to come up and be quiet about it, as there were "a million ponies on the mesa," for so it seemed to his excited imagination.

Leaving their horses at the foot of the hill, Mr. Sinclair, Frank, and Ned went up the hill cautiously to reconnoiter. Sure enough! There they were, of all colors from jet black to milk white, some pied, with luxuriant manes and tails that swept the ground. They were small but spirited-looking animals. Most of them were quietly grazing, while others were capering about and playing like a company of schoolboys.

For some minutes the four friends lay close in the grass on the edge of the mesa, watching and admiring the beautiful sight, each boy choosing the pony that he would like to have and changing his mind as fast as his eye moved from one pretty fellow to another. Each boy was crazy to capture and own one of the animals. Uncle Bob was busy laying plans to get at least one to take the place of "Spareribs."

After a few minutes of whispered conversation, in which it was agreed that Frank should remain where he was with an eye on the baggage at the foot of the slope, and that the others should take the three horses and go for a chase, Mr. Sinclair and the two other boys ran quietly down from their hiding-place and proceeded to

unpack their horses, so as to leave them no encumbrance save their saddles, bridles, and lassos, the boys wild with excitement and Mr. Sinclair keeping up a running fire of advice and suggestion to aid them in the chase.

CHAPTER XIX

Wild Horses

THE boys had had some practice already in handling the lasso, but it was necessary for Mr. Sinclair to give them a little additional instruction, and particularly to warn them not to get in front of the drove after it was stampeded, as the danger of getting run over and trampled under foot was great.

When all was ready, the little company waved good-bye to Frank, and rode along the base of the slope in order to come up on the other side of the drove at a point where they could approach nearest to it without their presence being known. After riding a short distance Mr. Sinclair halted and dismounted, the boys following his example. They then led their ponies slowly up the hill, carefully picking their way that the crackle of sticks or the sound of hoofs might not warn the wild horses of their approach.

When near the summit they mounted their horses again. Mr. Sinclair then directed the boys to take their lassos from the horns of their saddles, wind them about the left arm, and

hold the noose in the right hand. These lassos were thongs of rawhide some fifteen yards in length, braided, and having a running noose fixed at the end.

When they had followed instructions and were ready for the start they gave the word to their ponies to go, at the same time spurring them forward, and with a bound they reached the level together, not twenty yards away from the edge of the drove. Pausing not even for an instant, the three horsemen bounded forward and at the same instant every horse's head in the drove was thrown in the air, and with snorting, rearing, and plunging, the whole mass went galloping away. The riders spurred their horses to the utmost, driving directly after the flying host. Mr. Sinclair, after going an hundred feet, drove his pony to the right, hoping to outflank the flying drove and cause them to circle round, and thus keep them from running in the direction of Frank, whose hiding-place was almost directly in line with the forward movement. Jack and Ned followed as best they could, and, when close upon the frightened animals, got ready to throw their lassos.

Ned singled out a black fellow of sturdy

build that with flowing mane and tail made a pretty picture as he plunged along on the very edge of the drove. When almost abreast of his intended prize, the boy let fly his lasso, but the noose dropped on the back of the black horse and slid off to the ground. The time lost in gathering it in for another throw could not be regained, and the chase was off for Ned.

Jack had his eye on a pure white horse — a little beauty of splendid proportions. Nothing tempted him to let go his lasso for any other prey, after his eyes lit upon this beautiful animal. "I'll have you, my beauty," cried Jack at the top of his voice, as leaning far over his horse's neck he whirled the noose of his rawhide thong about his head. Then the white horse gave a plunge and for a moment was lost amid the struggling mass. Jack drove his own horse straight at the first opening that he saw in the flying forms, and, scattering them with his shouts, he soon came again alongside of the white horse. Unmindful of his danger, he was now almost surrounded by flying heads and feet. The dust from the mesa completely covered him, but the boy's eyes readily distinguished the glistening sides of the wild horse he was pursuing.

"Ah, there you are, old fellow; you can't get away again," he cried, and "whiz" went the lasso. For a moment the noose seemed to stand still in midair; then it settled directly over the head and neck of the white horse. Jack's heart gave a great jump. He had caught his prize.

Mr. Sinclair was now giving his whole attention to turning the course of the frightened drove. By great effort he had forced his horse nearly abreast of the leaders, but not yet had he driven them one inch from the straight course. Wasting no time in catching horses, using his lasso for a whip, and yelling at his own horse and bringing down upon his rump the loops of leather cord, he dashed ahead to save the life of Frank, who lay concealed directly in the path of the oncoming avalanche.

But Frank had seen his danger. At first he was rooted to the spot by the excitement of the unusual spectacle; then all of a sudden realizing his danger, he looked about him for a place of safety. A great rock lay halfway down the slope, part way embedded in the soil. Running to this, he crouched behind it just as the foremost of the struggling mass tore by him, sending the stones and loose earth flying

in all directions Wave after wave of flying animals thundered about him. His eyes were blinded, and his noise and throat were choking with dust, while his face and hands were bruised with flying stones.

When the last wave had passed he crept out from his shelter and ran to the place where the baggage had been left, to find it trampled into an indescribable mass. Just then, at the top of the hill, Uncle Bob appeared, hatless and horseless, waving his arms and shouting with joy on seeing him safe — if not sound.

In his anxiety Mr. Sinclair had forgotten Jack and Ned, so as soon as he had found Frank he hastened to learn the fate of the two others. He was not long in finding them, engaged in a curious combat with the wild horse Jack had lassoed.

As soon as the noose had settled over the white horse's head Jack had begun to pull the lasso. As the noose tightened about the animal's neck it had lessened its pace, rearing and plunging in its mad fright. Then Jack, quickly dismounting, had followed the wild horse on foot as fast as he could, tightening the noose as he ran, until finally the captive had fallen for want of breath and lay upon the

ground struggling and kicking, to the infinite danger of anything within reach.

At this moment Mr. Sinclair and Frank came up.

"Splendid, my boy, splendid!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair. "You have captured a beauty — one of the best of the lot."

Then cautiously approaching the horse's head and tightening the lasso as he went, Mr. Sinclair fastened a pair of hopples on the animal's fore feet and ran a noose around its under jaw; then he loosened the noose about the neck of the animal. So soon as it got its breath again it reared and plunged until its sides were covered with foam. The boys expected every moment to see the horse throw itself over on its back, but Mr. Sinclair firmly held it by the rope attached to the noose about its jaw.

When the frightened animal became well nigh exhausted, Mr. Sinclair approached its head hand over hand along the cord by which he held it; then placing his hands over its eyes he breathed into its nostrils — a method early adopted by the Indians for taming wild horses, and the beautiful animal stood conquered.

In another half hour the company was again

on its way, the boys riding, and Mr. Sinclair leading the white horse, which as yet had not been broken to the saddle.

CHAPTER XX

A Fourth of July Celebration

THE next evening the little party pitched camp for the night in a deep canon. With great alacrity the boys set about making preparations for the night, being tired from the hard travel of the day and anxious to get rest, particularly as Mr. Sinclair had informed them that the following day would be the Fourth of July and that he had a surprise awaiting them in the way of an Independence Day celebration. The boys had lost all track of time; they knew only that day followed night and night followed day; so when Mr. Sinclair said, "Boys, tomorrow is the Fourth of July," they fairly jumped with joy, for the very mention of it brought visions of good times and recalled to their minds home and its associations, which now seemed so far away.

"What shall we do to celebrate?" asked Ned, with an inquiring glance at Mr. Sinclair.

"Never mind, my boy; no American boy fails to celebrate the birth of American independence, and I know you boys well enough to know that if I should let the Fourth go by

without giving you notice you would never forgive me. Now, I have done more than give you notice, for I have planned a celebration, and you must wait and see."

"Hurrah for Uncle Bob and George Washington!" cried Jack, and everybody, even Uncle Bob himself, swung his hat and huzzaed.

The next morning — the morning of the Fourth — dawned clear and beautiful and the company was early astir, Mr. Sinclair carrying about with him an air of mystery and the boys wondering what was coming and commenting upon the possibilities of a celebration without flags and fire-crackers and bells; but they had great confidence in their leader and were certain that something would happen.

They had not gone more than a mile along the bed of the canon, which seemed to grow deeper and darker as they proceeded, before the command was given to halt.

"Hobble your ponies, boys, and bring along your guns and ammunition, for we are going to celebrate," said Mr. Sinclair.

"What! In this dark place?" asked Frank, with disappointment in every feature.

"Why not?" answered Mr. Sinclair. "Is your patriotism to be daunted by a little

shadow? What grander place for a celebration than in this magnificent highway through the heart of the eternal mountains? We can just imagine these great boulders and columns of rock that stretch themselves to the very sky to be the Washingtons, the Jeffersons, and the Adamses of 1776 — those men hewn, as it were, from the solid rock of principle — who stood for liberty against the thunders and lightnings of oppression's forces, just as these stern old walls of granite have opposed the storms of centuries. Then there is that patch of Colorado blue sky hanging above us that needs only the imagination of an American boy to transform it into an American flag. And see! Yonder goes an eagle, mounting toward the flag. Grand symbol of American strength and freedom! Can you want anything more fitting? Now, don't you feel sorry for the boys in the cities and towns of the hills and plains, with their popguns and tin horns? Just count yourselves the luckiest boys in all this great country today!"

Each of the three boys felt the spirit of the words, and, their hearts catching the patriotic glow, they shouted: "Three cheers for the grand old mountains! Now, three for the

blue sky, and three more for the American eagle!"

"Now, boys, for a climb; we'll leave the ponies and baggage here. Bring your guns and follow me," said Uncle Bob.

In a moment the little company was making its way up the side of the canon — a difficult and dangerous task. At times they could proceed only by dropping on all fours; then they joined hands and braced and held one another as they swung around narrow ledges or climbed along slippery paths. Once when near the summit they looked back over the path they had come; accustomed as they had become to mountain climbing, nothing before had given them such a feeling of insecurity; they became fairly dizzy as their eyes searched the uncertain depths below them. Their ponies seemed like rats, and the bottom of the canon like a narrow dark thread running in and out.

"Where are we going, Uncle Bob?" asked Frank in a stage whisper.

"To celebrate," he answered. "Come on!"

After another hard climb they reached what appeared to be a little depression in the side of the mountain and near its top. It proved to be the mouth of a little cavern. Entering

it, they proceeded for a short distance, to find that they had come suddenly up against the solid rock, while above them appeared a hole in the rock roof, through which a patch of blue sky showed itself. It was a strange freak of nature. But they had not been its discoverers. Against the side of the chimney-like opening a rude ladder had been placed by venturesome hunters and there left. Uncle Bob appeared familiar with the place, and at once motioned to the boys to climb up. Frank went first, and after him Jack, Ned, and Mr. Sinclair.

Slowly, and with many cautioning suggestions from Mr. Sinclair below, the little party made its way toward the patch of blue sky. The boys said nothing. The novelty of the adventure and the dizzy height awed and silenced them.

Frank reached the mouth of the hole and climbed out and the others quickly followed. Then all stood motionless on the tiptop of one of the giant mountains of Colorado, just as the sun, full orbed, was casting his shafts of white and gold against the eastern slopes of the great rocky barriers.

"By Jove, this is grand!" cried Frank.

"But wait," said Uncle Bob; "one more

step or two and then for the celebration." Then with a few rapid strides he led the way around a rock against which they had been standing, and there, right before the very eyes of the three boys, across a mighty cavern, stood in all his grandeur the giant of the Colorado mountains — peerless Pike's Peak.

"Comrades, salute Pike's Peak!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair, and following the spokesman's example the boys lifted their hats.

It was fully a minute before the boys could get breath enough for an expression of their surprise and gratification. The mountain on which they stood was a high one; the boys thought as they climbed it that it could be no higher; but now before their eyes one lifted its head far, far above them — so far that even now in July its summit was covered with snow that glistened and sparkled in the morning sun. Great shadows lay across its face, showing the wrinkles in its sides, and about its base were the somber tints of forests and green slopes. Surrounded by mountains themselves great, this leviathan of the Colorado ranges outtopped and outshone them all.

"Did you ever imagine it was like that?" asked Ned of his companions, as they threw

themselves down on the bare ground beside Mr. Sinclair to view the panorama before them at their leisure.

"It's a hundred times grander," said Frank.

"I am glad to hear you say so," remarked Mr. Sinclair. "Many — indeed, the majority of persons — who come to Pike's Peak express disappointment."

"I don't see how they can," broke in one of the boys.

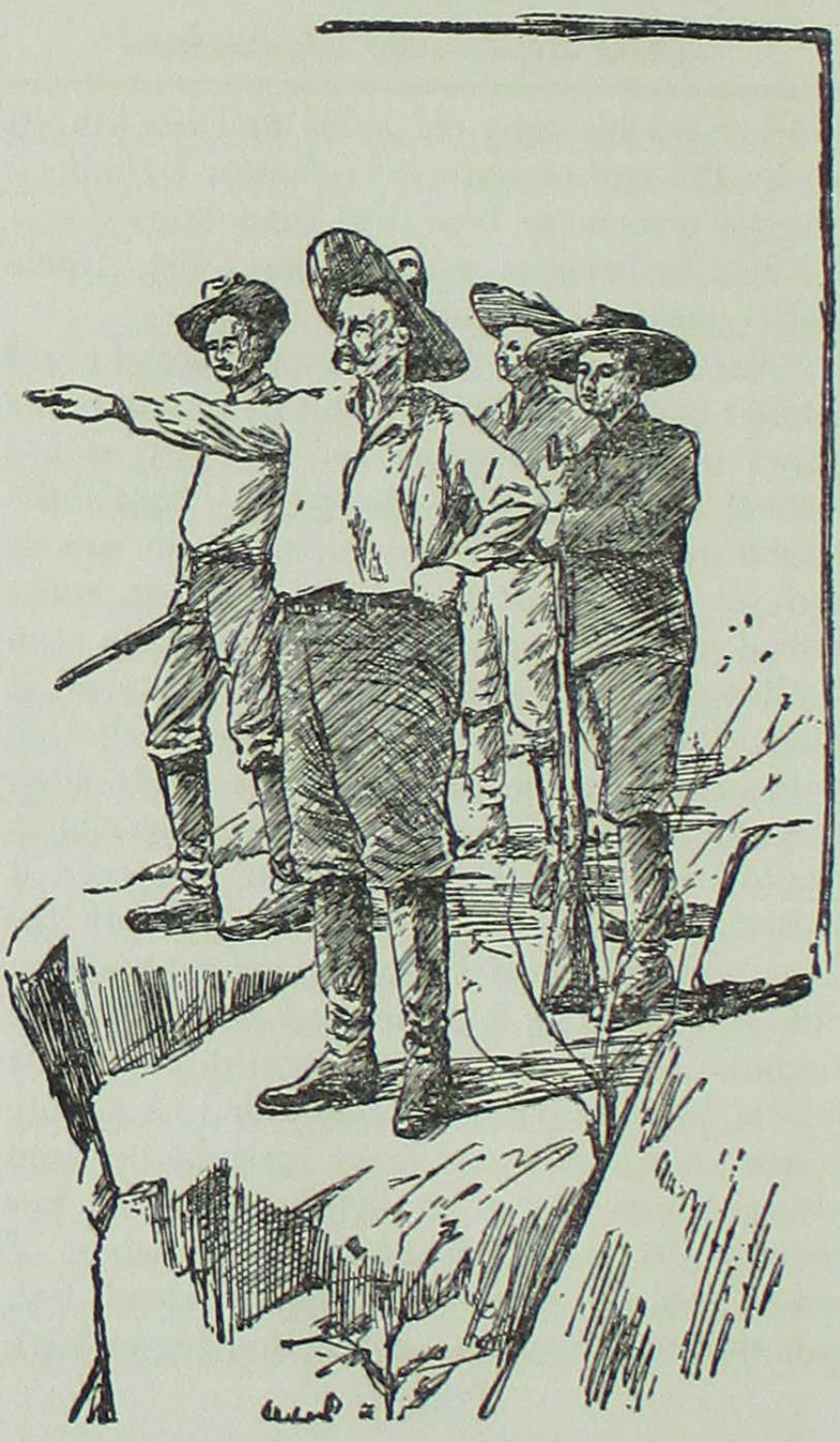
"I can only account for it in this way," said Mr. Sinclair. "They come West with exaggerated ideas. Pike's Peak is pointed out to them from the train or the trail, as they approach it, from a distance of many miles. They come up to it gradually and it grows imperceptibly. But you came upon it face to face, at close quarters, and unexpectedly; hence your surprise and delight.

"There is another thing about getting acquainted with this old mountain — the oftener you see him the grander and more majestic he looks. From my cabin window down yonder in Cheyenne Canon I can see him each morning as I rise from my bed, and I never begin the day without first bidding good morning to my big neighbor; and every time I look from my

window on his gray old sides and his top lit up by the sun or bathed in clouds, I think — 'Bigger and more beautiful than ever!'"

"That's because you are an artist, Uncle Bob!" remarked Frank.

"Not a bit of it! It's the experience of every dweller in these regions. This mountain never grows old. Its beauties are to even us old settlers ever new and changing. That's the reason we love it. It is so human in its moods and yet at heart it is old Pike's Peak, rock-ribbed, and ancient as the sun! I have seen it all aglow with sunlight; I have watched it when the thunders careened and bellowed from crag to crag, and lightnings wrote their fiery story across its face; I have seen the clouds swallow it from sight; and then I've seen it arched with rainbow colors such as only the clear atmosphere of these regions makes possible, and amid all it is the same imperturbable monarch of this mountain world. So is it typical, boys, of our great Republic. A mighty upheaval of noble sentiment brought her into life, and now she rears her head among her companions as their leader. The sunshine of peace and prosperity has played about her, and storms of war and conflicting forces have



"We have a great country, and nobody is prepared to love it till he has seen it."

engulfed her, but through it all the Republic has endured triumphant."

"Why, Uncle Bob, you are as eloquent as a politician out for votes," said Ned, laughing.

"But my eloquence, if you choose to call it that," answered Mr. Sinclair, "springs from something deeper than does the kind that is usually let off on the stump, my boys. We have a great country, and nobody is prepared to love it till he has seen it. One should breathe the free air of these mountains for a time to get the true American spirit."

"Say, I am just full of it myself," cried Frank, springing to his feet. "What can we do?"

"I'll tell you what," said Ned. "Let's sing 'America.' We learned it in school, Uncle Bob, and I just feel like singing it now."

"Agreed," said Mr. Sinclair. "Let's all stand, take off our hats, and sing. Here goes ——"

Then four voices rang out upon the top of the mountain, two sweet, boyish voices carrying the air of the grand old hymn, with one

clear tenor and one big manly bass bringing in the harmony:

"My country! 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died!
Land of the Pilgrims' pride!
From every mountain side,
Let freedom ring.

"My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

"Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees,
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake,
Let all that breathe partake,
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong."

When the song was ended, Uncle Bob

brushed a big tear out of the corner of an eye and said, "Now, boys, for a volley. Ready! Fire!"

Four rifles cracked in unison, three lusty cheers and a "tiger" rolled down the sides of the mountain, and the celebration was over.

When it was time to go the boys cast about them for mementos of the day and the occasion; nothing better presented itself, so they each took from the ground a few round pebbles and stowed them carefully away in the pockets of their hunting shirts.

As they turned to go down the mountain, Frank said, "Uncle Bob, I believe I'll be a better man for this celebration; and do you know what I'd like to do? Plant an American flag on the top of Pike's Peak."

"And you will before you are two days older," answered Mr. Sinclair.

CHAPTER XXI

In Uncle Bob's Cabin

THE prospect of climbing Pike's Peak and planting thereon an American flag kept the boys in a fever of excitement for the twenty-four hours following their unique celebration of the Fourth of July. Mr. Sinclair fanned their interest by relating to them stories of early attempts to climb the giant peak, many of which were unsuccessful and all of which were attended with great danger. They were particularly interested in the relation of the story of how Mr. Sinclair had made his first successful attempt to climb the mountain, and had come near losing his life in a great snow storm that overtook him before he had reached the top.

"But it's different now, boys," said he; "the danger is not nearly so great. The paths are pretty well marked out, and I have been over them times enough, so that, while I can promise you a hard climb, I don't expect you to suffer in life or limb."

On the evening of July Fourth the boys found themselves in Mr. Sinclair's cabin, near

the base of Pike's Peak, the happiest trio of boys in the world. There they found letters from home awaiting them, those postmarked of late date indicating some uneasiness on the part of the folks at home at not hearing from them promptly; so each boy at once set about relieving anxious minds by writing letters, to go by the next pony express. And such letters they were! Each boy tried to tell all that he had done, but with very poor success, for long before the stories were finished, their hands, hardened by work and unaccustomed to the pen, grew very tired, and each boy ended his letter with something like, "Well, you'll have to wait till we get home, as I can't begin to tell you everything we've done. We are having the time of our lives."

Mr. Sinclair's cabin was a rude but comfortable affair. Its site was a picturesque one, for it stood perched on a steep slope just across the valley from the foothills of Pike's Peak. This little valley, or rather basin, was enclosed on its three sides by precipitous rocks, and into it converged three canons, down one of which, Cheyenne Canon, flowed a clear, sparkling, mountain stream. Not a quarter of a mile away, and just opposite the cabin, arose the

first slopes of the great Peak, with a glistening summit that stood guard over all.

You could not imagine a more appropriate spot for the home of an artist. Here Mr. Sinclair had lived for ten or more years, being, indeed, one of the first white men to settle permanently in the region. Hunters, miners, fortune seekers and desperadoes of every description had come and cast eyes full of momentary interest on the wonders of this mountain amphitheater and then had gone away; but once the artist set foot within it he was bound captive hand and foot. Here he pitched his camp, or rather built his cabin, and from it he made frequent excursions into the wilderness of mountains and plains on either side; here he met and entertained the Indians with whom he soon made friends, and gave refuge to many a poor emigrant, or sick and stranded hunter or adventurer on the Cheyenne trail.

The cabin was a veritable museum. Scarcely a square foot of wall space was without its mementos of the hunt. An immense pair of antlers crowned the door, while on the wall opposite a great buffalo head looked down, and skins of mountain lions, bears, wolves, and foxes lay in profusion on the floors or hung upon

the walls. The gay plumage of birds, Indian ornaments, clothing and utensils, with rugs made by the Mexican Indians of the south, lent color to the scene; and among them all, in great profusion but with strange harmony of arrangement, were products of the artist's brush — pictures of mountain and animal life, and Indian studies in all stages of completion. Fishing poles and an assortment of weapons of all descriptions hung overhead — the whole making a strange confusion of barbaric and civilized comforts perhaps nowhere else to be met with.

An old Indian squaw kept house for Mr. Sinclair and jealously looked out for his safety and his comfort, stealing in and out about her tasks in her moccasined feet, seemingly oblivious of the presence of strangers. Mr. Sinclair called her Minne, and on their arrival she was brought in and introduced to the boys and told that she was to look after them and see that they wanted for nothing that the cabin afforded. She managed to grunt out a consent, but the boys thought they had never seen so expressionless a face.

The following day they spent in roaming about in the neighboring canons, taking an

occasional shot, but the greater part of the time observing the advice of Mr. Sinclair, to take it easy and rest preparatory to the arduous work that was to follow.

At nightfall they were lying at full length on the ground before the door of the cabin. Their talk reverted to the big trapper, Jim Galloway, whom they had met on the train on the way from Chicago to Denver; and just as Mr. Sinclair was saying, "I half expected to find him here on our return," a prolonged "Hello!" came up from the valley, and the man sprang to his feet and quickly cast his eye over the trail as it wound to the east along the bank of the mountain stream below. His eye finally rested on an object moving toward them from a distance, and an answering "Hello!" went echoing down among the rocks. "It's Galloway!" shouted Mr. Sinclair. "See yonder?"

"I don't see him," said Ned.

"Nor I," echoed the others.

"There, just beyond the bend in the stream. Now he's crossing. Here, Minne, bring my glass," he called in Indian tongue to the old squaw.

Quickly the squaw emerged from the cabin bearing a field glass, which Uncle Bob soon

adjusted to the boys' vision. After a look they shouted with joy and clapped one another on the back, almost turning somersaults of delight at the prospect of having the big trapper as a companion on their mountain climb.

Soon, by a zigzag course among the rocks, Galloway, astride of his horse, was with them. Mr. Sinclair gave him a welcome in true western style, set before him a hot supper, lighted for him a good pipe, and told him the story of their experiences since the day they parted in Denver, and then invited him to join them in their adventure of the morrow.

CHAPTER XXII

"Pike's Peak or Bust!"

EARLY the following morning Mr. Sinclair and the trapper began their preparations for the climb, the boys looking eagerly on, their impatience growing with every moment. As the morning was warm, it was with considerable wonder that they saw the two men strapping on the backs of the horses heavy coats and blankets. "Never you mind, young fellers; you'll be mighty glad you've got 'em, afore we're through with this lark," said Galloway, —a remark that tended to give the boys a chill in advance.

A short time after sunrise the party mounted and began finding its way, single file, down the mountain side into the valley, each member astride his pony, and carrying a gun and ammunition, a stout staff, blanket, and a heavy coat. The two men carried extra baggage in the way of a small tent, cooking utensils, some faggots, a supply of dried buffalo meat, bread and coffee, and what to the boys seemed a surprising amount of rope.

Once in the valley, they quickened their pace

for a few hundred feet along the creek, till it branched. Following one of its branches that came tumbling down a wide ravine, the boys realized that they had at last set foot on the big mountain which before the next morning they were to conquer. It was easy at first; the trail was plain, the music of the brook refreshing, and the shade of the trees under which the way ran delightful. At noon they rested, and made a corral for the horses, in which they left them to feed on the grasses, which were now becoming a little scant. Orders were given to unstrap the baggage, for here the animals were to be left, as the climb from this point must be on foot. The men loaded upon their own backs the greater share of the burden, despite the protests of the boys, who each declared that in the bracing air that now filled their lungs they felt strong enough to carry even their horses if need be. But their elders knew what they were about, and gave to each boy only what was absolutely necessary for the climb.

"Forward, march!" cried Mr. Sinclair, when all was ready. "Now, go single file, follow your leader, and don't lose sight of him for an instant. I will go first, then Ned, Frank, and

Jack in that order, and Galloway will cover the rear. Don't stumble or slip. A rolling stone has been the death of many a brave mountain climber."

An hour's climbing brought a decided change in the appearance of things about them, as well as in the feelings of the boys. They had ceased to be eager for more freight. Frank was seen frequently to shift his gun from one position to another, and Ned had grown less and less talkative, till now he had lapsed into absolute silence. It was growing more and more difficult to breathe in the rarefied atmosphere into which they were coming, and a frequent rest became necessary.

"That last hundred feet was a corker," declared Jack.

"But that's no more than a starter, young un," said Galloway with a grimace. Something in Galloway's looks made the boys think they were engaged in a serious business.

In another half hour a long halt was necessary while Galloway returned over the trail for quite a distance to fetch some cold water to bathe one of Ned's ankles which he had sprained. Night was now rapidly coming on, and they had just reached the timber limit.

Their final resting place for the day was under the last few straggling, stunted trees, beyond which no vegetation appeared, excepting here and there a little tuft of hardy mountain lichen. Above them in the gathering dusk appeared great masses of boulders and frowning peaks and buttresses barren and forbidding in aspect.

"Shall we go any farther tonight, Uncle Bob?" asked Frank, with a voice in which there was more than a trace of fear.

"Certainly, my boy; night's the time for mountain climbing. It will be moonlight and a glorious night. Tomorrow morning we'll see the sunrise from the top of Pike's Peak."

There was no answer to this from any of the boys, but each took a new grip on his courage as they heard again the command, "Forward, march!"

Ned found, when he regained his feet, that his sprained ankle would not bear his weight.

"I can't go any farther, Uncle Bob," he declared, pitifully. "I'll stay here while you go on; you can pick me up on the return. I'm awful sorry, but I just can't walk."

"Yes, you can; I'll help you," said the big trapper. "You'll git over it. Just use that leg

as much as you can, and when you can't, lean your weight on me," and Galloway put his strong arm under the boy's and fairly lifted him over the ground. "If we git into a tight pinch you can git on my back. I carried a sick Injun nearly all day once, and you ain't half a load."

Ned protested, but obeyed because he couldn't help it, and thus they proceeded.

The moon was just rising over the horizon when, rounding a spur in the mountain side, they heard just ahead of them a deep, ominous growl which brought them to a standstill.

"A mountain lion!" whispered Mr. Sinclair. "He's going to dispute our passage. He's probably just in our path and he's heard or smelled an enemy coming. Quick, Frank, hide behind this boulder. Ned, you and Jack climb on that ledge of rock up there, and Galloway and I will hide just behind that angle of rock and meet his Royal Highness when he comes, and if he don't come we'll go after him."

It was all done in a moment. Not one of the little party dared draw a breath as they waited in the darkness for the approach of the beast. He was surely coming, for they

could hear his low guttural growl coming nearer and nearer. Another roar resounded among the rocks — this time a mighty one that seemed to come from not ten feet away, and then another one from farther up the mountain.

"Two, by Jove! We've got to fight our way," said Mr. Sinclair in a whisper, and just then a dark moving mass came around the angle of rock and two fierce eyes shone out in the darkness.

A splendid mark for two expert hunters, and not twenty feet away.

"Bang!" went two guns at once, and the boys saw the dark mass tumble headlong down the mountain side.

"Now, look out for the other," shouted the trapper; "he's probably following. I'll go on ahead and meet him halfway."

"Let me go, too," shouted Jack, as he jumped from his hiding place, and before a word could be said to stop him he was off up the trail after the trapper.

The two went on in silence for a while, each with eyes and ears alert and gun cocked.

Suddenly Galloway paused and said, "That

feller is just behind them rocks. We'll climb up there and git right over him."

With this the agile hunter began the climb of the steep slope, using hands and feet to keep from slipping and thus starting an avalanche of rocks. "Careful, young un; look out for yourself."

"All right, sir; I'm right behind you," answered Jack, promptly. Then his foot slipped, the little twig to which he was holding gave way, and the boy was rolling down the side of the mountain, his gun and staff flying ahead and a veritable shower of stones following.

The trapper at the first sound sprang to his feet. But what could he do? He shouted: "Young un, hold on! Dig in your feet — stop! stop!" but he might as well have called to the winds. Then all was still.

The trapper called again: "Young un! Young un!" No response.

Then taking his lasso from his belt, he tied one end to a boulder and cautiously let himself down the steep side of the rock, crying at every step, "Young un, are you there? Hold on! I'm coming."

When he had reached the length of his line he stopped, peered down and listened. He

thought he heard a voice calling — faintly, but surely a voice, and a boy's voice! From what point it came he could not determine. Again he shouted: "Hold on; I'm coming." Then digging a foothold in the hard earth with his hunting-knife, he stood upright and vigorously shook and twisted his lasso until it loosened itself from the rock above and came tumbling down after him. Tying one end to his belt, he fastened to the other a small stone and threw it down in the direction of the voice, crying, "Catch hold, young un!"

The rope paid out till it was taut, and the trapper listened and waited.

"Take hold!" he shouted, but no answering pull from the rope indicated that the boy could reach it. Then with his knife he cut another step as far down as he could reach and planted himself in it. Again he shouted and waited, but there came no response. He lowered himself to a new foothold, and so on, step after step, until, nearly despairing, he felt suddenly an answering pull on the rope and knew that he had reached the boy. "Come on now, young un!" he shouted, at the same time bracing his feet firmly and catching the rope with both his strong hands.

The rope was stout, and the trapper was good to hold a ton. The vibrations of the rope indicated that the boy was on the way, slowly but surely. "You're safe, young un; come on. Hold tight!"

The man did not need to urge, for Jack, though wounded and bleeding and weak, was pulling himself hand over hand, slowly but surely, knowing that it was his one chance of safety.

At last he lay at the feet of Galloway, breathless and faint. Tying one end of the lasso about the boy's body and the other close up around his own, the trapper began the rest of the perilous climb to the trail above. With knife in hand he laboriously cut step after step, dragging the boy's now unconscious body after him.

At last the man's strength gave way. To go farther with his burden was impossible, and to stand there a matter of great peril. If he could only fire his gun and bring assistance! But the boy's gun lay in a hundred pieces at the bottom of the rocky steep, and the trapper's was in the path above, where he had left it before starting on his dangerous mission.

The trapper then halloed, but got no re-

sponse. To make matters worse, it was growing cold. Something like snow or fine sleet fell upon his bare forehead. He stooped over and rubbed the boy's hands and face, and fearfully felt of his pulse, and halloed again. The boy's form moved slightly, and his voice came feebly.

"Mother! I am glad to be home. Yes, we've got him. See his two fiery eyes! Hold me closer, I am falling. Uncle Bob, did we put the flag on Pike's Peak?"

Hardened old Jim Galloway wiped the moisture from his eyes and stroked the boy's head. "Young un, it's all right! We're all here, young un. We're holdin' on to you and you're safe. We'll put the old flag up there sure, and you'll be the one to do it."

Again the trapper called the long "Hello! hello!" of the mountains. Away in the distance came an answering shout. The man then gathered the boy close in his arms to keep him warm and talked to him as a mother talks to a sick child.

Soon Mr. Sinclair's voice was heard from above. "Throw us a rope, Bob," cried the trapper; "we're down here holdin' on for dear life."

At once the whiz of a lasso was heard, and its noose fell almost over Galloway and his burden.

Quickly the trapper adjusted the noose about his body. Holding the boy with one arm and with the other clinging to the earth, he called, "Pull, Bob," and at last laid his living burden at the feet of Mr. Sinclair.

"Bob, I've been in a hundred ticklish places in these mountains, but I never felt skeered till this last half hour when I heerd that boy go rollin' down, and when I saw him growin' numb in my arms and talkin' about his mother and that flag. Fer a minit I was a coward, an' I ain't a-goin' ter do any more braggin' about my never turnin' the white feather."

"Jim, dear fellow, it wasn't cowardice. You never were braver in your life, and if I could do it without danger of our all tumbling down the mountain together, I'd give you a hug that would remind you of the day that grizzly got you up on the 'north branch.' You are a big, noble-hearted fellow, and I love you for this night's work."

"No, Bob; don't say that. I told you once I'd pay you back fer savin' my life that day 'mong the Injuns. I'd 'a saved this boy to-

night fer his own sake an' his mother's, but I want to tell you that the biggest pay I git out of it is to lay him alive at your feet an' think I've done suthin' thet pleases you."

"Have it as you will, Jim; the score is more than even. Now, to get this boy back to where Ned and Frank are and get him into shape to travel. He's all right, but for some bruises. We'll rest a little while and try to make some coffee and get up circulation. We must move on, though, for there's no place here for an all-night camp, and from the feel of it we're likely to be caught in a snowstorm, and that'll be worse than mountain lions."

With this he picked up Jack and bore him as if he were a mere infant back to the rendezvous among the rocks.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Top of the Mountain

It was with no little difficulty that Mr. Sinclair and the trapper, carrying between them the half conscious boy, finally succeeded in making their way back to where Frank and Ned, in a state of great suspense, were awaiting them. The boys had heard indistinctly the trapper's calls for help and their minds were full of all sorts of direful forebodings; so their joy was unbounded when they saw the forms of their three friends approaching through the darkness.

Tenderly the two men laid their burden upon the ground and set to work to discover the extent of his injuries. They were not long in finding that, aside from a few bruises and cuts from the sharp stones upon which he had fallen, Jack was all right, though weakened by the strain upon his nerves and the severe drain upon his strength. A parley was then held as to what was best to be done. Galloway suggested that but a short distance up the mountain there was an overhanging ledge of rock under which they might find shelter,

make a fire, warm themselves with some hot coffee and take a bite of something to eat. The suggestion met with everyone's approval, for there was evidence of an approaching storm, and to be caught in the open under such circumstances was not to be thought of.

The trapper superintended the preparations for the move, and gave the word to advance. This time the members of the party proceeded in single file as before, but all were fastened at the belt to a rope that extended from the trapper, who acted as leader, to Mr. Sinclair, who brought up the rear. Each, with the exception of Jack, who had lost his in the slide down the mountain, carried a long staff which at every step he thrust into the earth as a secure support, should his feet slip.

A brisk climb of twenty minutes brought the party to the overhanging ledge. No sooner had they freed themselves from the rope and thrown themselves down within its shelter than the storm, which had been impending, broke upon them.

"Lucky we got here in time," said the trapper, "for not even a goat could keep his feet out thar in thet storm. It's the worst night I ever seen in the mountains."

To the boys, it seemed as if all the demons of earth and sky had broken loose. The thunders seemed to come from under their very feet, and the lightnings, which played incessantly about them, seemed at times to wrap them as in sheets of flame.

"Talk about being in a storm, boys, you're in one now for sure, for we're right among the clouds," said Mr. Sinclair. "If we get out of this safely, and I guess we will, you will never need to be afraid of a thunderstorm again."

Galloway was now doing his utmost to get a fire started among the faggots that he had carried all the way from the foot of the mountain, and finally, after repeated failures to keep the flame a-going amid the eddying currents of wind, his efforts were rewarded with success, and the cavern was lit up with a glow of light. Then the storm was forgotten in the ruddy glow of the fire and the aroma of good coffee, and even Ned forgot his sprained ankle and joined in the expressions of contentment. The coffee had a good effect on Jack, too, and, except for a feeling of soreness, he declared that he was as good as new and anxious to resume the march.

The storm was of short duration, for in half

an hour a glorious moon shone out among the scattering clouds; in that rare atmosphere, it looked like a veritable ball of silver rolling through the heavens.

"Come, lads, let's be on the move," cried Mr. Sinclair. "No time for sentiment now; we've got to reach the top before sun-up and we've no time to lose. The rest of the way will not be nearly so difficult. You will have some trouble in breathing. We shall have to make frequent halts to give you a chance to catch your breath, for you can't stand long-continued exertion up here."

The boys didn't need this advice, for at every few paces they found themselves almost gasping for breath.

"The air is so rare," said Uncle Bob, "that you've got to get a good deal of it to satisfy you. The lungs don't fill up so quick. It's good for a fellow, I tell you — makes him throw out his chest. You mustn't overdo it, however, for up here your blood gets to going like a race-horse and your head gets dizzy."

With every step the boys more and more realized that they were climbing into the upper air. At first they had to be cautioned to go slowly and stop frequently, but now there was

no need of it. First one and then another of the boys threw himself upon the ground and declared, between short gasps for breath, that he must wait a minute. Their elders were patient with them and gave them all the time they needed, so that when at last, shortly after midnight, Uncle Bob shouted, "One more climb, boys, and we're on top," they were almost inclined to break away from the two men and make a run for the summit. They would have done so had it not been for the trapper, who said very gravely, "Boys, I never break a promise. I told this young un here," pointing to Jack, "as he lay in my arms down the mountain there, thet he would put the flag up yonder, and he's goin' to do it. Gimme yer arm, young un," and with this the big trapper placed his arm within Jack's and the two together led the way up the last steep climb. A rest or two, a hurried scramble on hands and feet, a shout of triumph which could only be heard a few feet away in the thin air, and Jack stood on the topmost point of the grand old mountain, waving in his hand a small tattered flag, the only one of which the cabin of Uncle Bob boasted. Uncle Bob's staff did service as a flag-pole, and while Jack held it

high above his head the boys gathered a pile of stones, in which Jack planted the staff and marked the final step in their conquest of Pike's Peak.

"Now, boys, for an hour or two of sleep," said Uncle Bob.

"But where shall we sleep?" asked Ned.

"I'll take you to the house of the old man of the mountain," replied the other.

There was enough mystery and excitement in these words to induce the boys to turn with alacrity and follow the two men, who led the way down a gentle slope on one side of the summit to an old house built of rough stone, containing but one room, which Mr. Sinclair declared had been built by mountain climbers and had served as a resting-place for many a weary head. It was a rude hut scarcely deserving the dignified title of "house," but it served as a shelter, to some extent, at least, from the cold night air. The boys followed their leaders' example, bundled themselves up as best they could in their blankets, and soon were fast asleep.

They had been asleep a short two hours when the voice of the trapper awakened them. As they arose they already saw through the chinks

in the wall the approaching dawn. The trapper was standing in the doorway, pointing a long bony finger toward the east.

"Mornin's comin', young uns; git up an' see the only mornin' you ever seen in yer life. The sun-god ain't a-goin' to wait fer ye, an' he's on the way. He's just hitchin' up over the rim o' the earth yonder, an' if ye hurry ye'll be the first American boys west of the Mississippi to see him."

Sooner than it takes to tell it, Frank, Jack, and Ned were on their feet and had shaken off their coverings of the night. Mr. Sinclair had already left the cabin and was nowhere to be seen. Just as the boys stepped out of the door they heard the crowing of a rooster that seemed to come from a thousand miles away. They turned to one another looks of astonishment. Again there came the familiar "Cock-a-doodle-doo," followed by a shout of laughter from behind a big boulder, and Uncle Bob's absence was explained. A few brisk steps brought them to the very summit of the peak, where they sat down and prepared to await the coming of the sun-god.

What story-teller will attempt to describe the majesty of daybreak on Pike's Peak?

What artist will attempt to picture it so that the reader may get even a faint glimpse of its wonders?

The boys sat for the first few minutes awed by the impressive silence and the ghostly specters of jagged peaks and ponderous boulders that lay beneath them. They marveled at the continuous change of color and strained their eyes in looking as, little by little, the great round earth at their feet began to take on form. They held their breath as the colors changed to the ruddy glow that betokened the near approach of the chariot of the sun. They beheld with wonder the great ribbons and streaks of color that shot off from the point on the horizon where the doors were opening to the day. The supreme moment had come. Uncle Bob, with the enthusiasm of the artist burning in his veins, arose to his feet and, lifting his hunting-cap high in the air, shouted:

"Up, boys, and salute the morning!" and as they arose each in turn held his cap high above his head.

"Welcome, glorious day, to all this western land!" cried the artist, and the trapper and the three boys, the latter with their hearts in their mouths, echoed the word "Welcome!" just as

the rim of the fiery mass peeped above the horizon, and shot its golden darts full in the face of Pike's Peak's hoary summit.

"The flag, boys!" shouted Uncle Bob.

They turned, and behind them Old Glory, in the stiff mountain breeze, showed every stripe and star bathed in a flood of light, while beyond it, as a background, were the dark shadows cast by the mountain. A grander picture never fell upon mortal eyes.

"Oh, it's worth it all, Uncle Bob," cried Jack.

"And I'd climb this mountain a thousand times to see it," echoed Ned.

"And you never told us what we were going to see," said Frank, reproachfully.

"My boy, who has ever described a Pike's Peak sunrise?" answered the artist. "I have never tried to do it, and I never shall. I just had to wait and let it tell its own story."

The greater part of the morning was passed by the boys in wandering about the summit, throwing stones into the depths below, filling their pockets with souvenirs, chiseling their initials on the rocks, trying to make out the courses of rivers, and guessing at distances.

When the word came that they must prepare

to descend the mountain, they found it hard to obey the summons. The thought that they should never perhaps again stand upon this favored spot of earth made them loath to leave. The suggestion, however, that they had better make the descent during the day, and that Minne, Uncle Bob's Indian housekeeper, would have a bounteous meal for them on their return, tended to make the leave-taking easier. The descent of the mountain was accomplished quickly and safely, and they were soon seated about the table in Mr. Sinclair's cabin, as hungry a lot of men and boys as ever attended a feast.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Parting

THE next morning the boys slept late. On arising they learned that the ponies had been saddled and bridled, and were standing at the door ready for an expedition, the nature of which was soon explained. It was the day for the arrival at the trading post, a few miles distant, of the pony express that was bringing the mails from the East, and Mr. Sinclair, the trapper, and the three boys were to ride over to the post and be on hand when the mail arrived. The boys had heard much about the pony express, so they eagerly swallowed their breakfast, jumped upon their ponies and cantered away in high spirits.

When they arrived at the post they found a curious crowd already assembled, made up of trappers, miners, and Indians who lolled about on the ground, some conversing in monosyllables, but the majority silently smoking and watching furtively the movements of their neighbors. Mr. Sinclair and Jim Galloway were evidently well and favorably known to

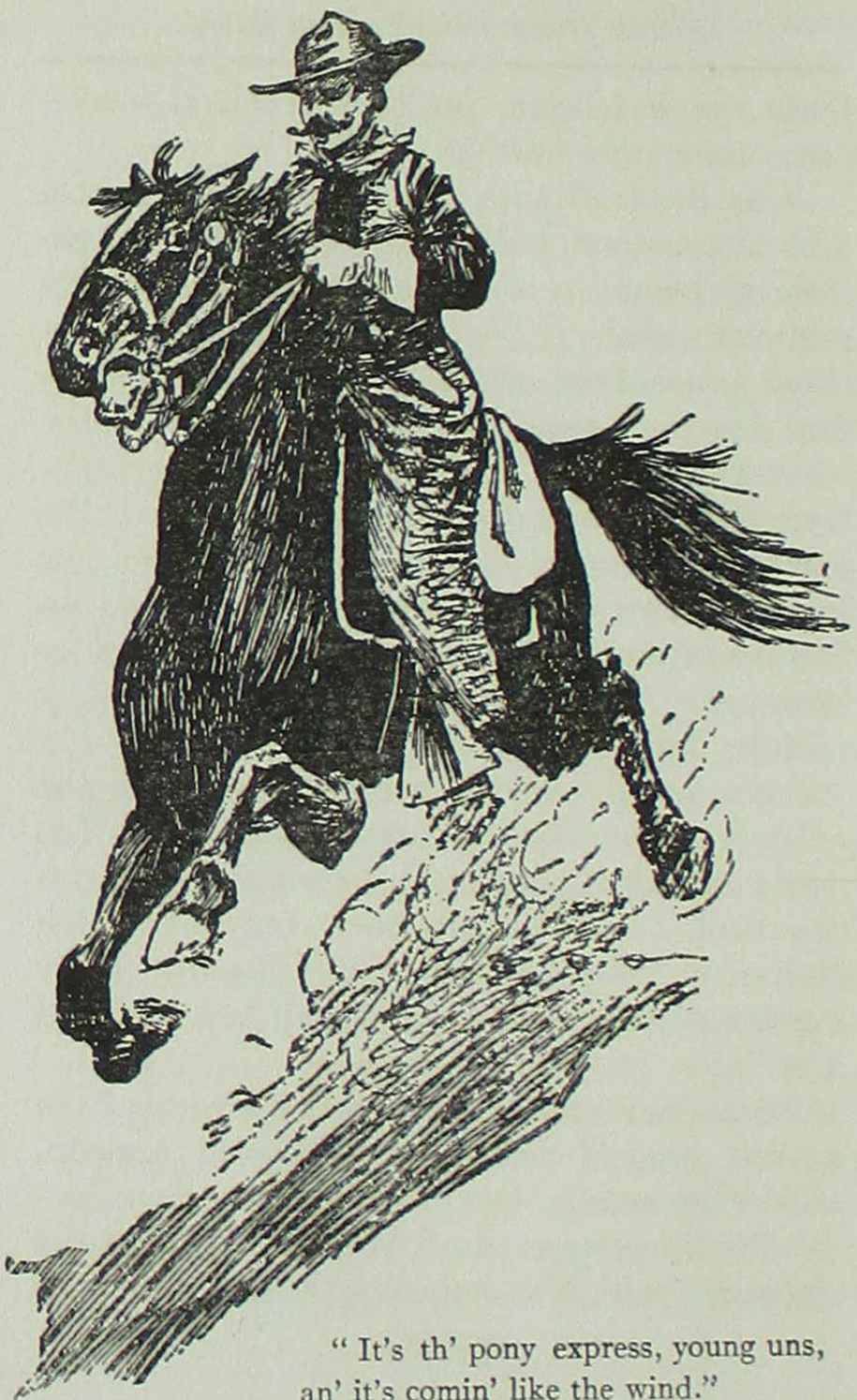
these rough fellows, for they received a welcome unusually cordial.

Near the trail that ran by the trading post a Mexican stood, holding by the bridle a tough-looking bronco on whose back was a heavy military saddle. The horse looked like anything other than what the boys expected to find for the use of the men who carried the mails through this rough and dangerous country. The horse's head nearly touched the earth, and his eyes were closed. Indeed, he looked thoroughly dejected, as if life had no further interest for him; but the boys came to thoroughly respect the animal before many minutes had passed.

Soon, one by one, the men arose from the ground. Occasionally one put his ear to the earth, and then, shading his eyes, looked down the trail. Uncle Bob took out his watch and said, "Boys, in three minutes the pony express is due. See how much behind-hand it is."

No sooner had he uttered these words than a little cloud of dust appeared on the horizon, and every man in the group was watching it.

"It's th' pony express, young uns," said the trapper, "an' it's comin' like the wind, for



" It's th' pony express, young uns, an' it's comin' like the wind."

Antelope Pete is ridin', an' there's no better an' braver rider on th' trail."

The boys' attention was now attracted by the bronco whose sleepy appearance they had noticed a few moments before. The Mexican, who was holding him, was having a hard time of it, for the animal was plunging from side to side and exhibiting life and excitement enough for a dozen horses. The bronco had heard the approach of the pony express and knew that its time for action had come. Like a war-horse sniffing the battle, his blood was up, and duty could not come too quick.

Now the pony express was in full view, the rider leaning far out over the horse's neck. The animal which he rode came at a long swinging gallop, flecks of foam flying from his mouth and his hoofs beating a tattoo upon the hard trail. The animal did not check its speed till it was abreast of the waiting group of men and boys, and then, suddenly throwing itself upon its haunches, came to a sudden stop. In a flash the rider threw himself to the earth, seized his saddle-bags, threw a packet of mail to the agent, received a small packet in return, slapped the saddle-bags across the back of the

fresh bronco, and with scarcely a word leaped upon the back of the restless animal and was off. It was all so quickly done that the boys scarcely had time to say a word or ask a question. They stood watching the rapidly retreating figures of man and horse until they were lost on the western horizon. Then Frank turned and found Mr. Sinclair reading a letter.

"Is there anything for us boys, Uncle Bob?" he asked, when the latter had finished reading.

"Yes, this is for you — or rather for all of us. Your father thinks that you had better come home, and he has invited me to return with you, and I've half a notion to accept."

"Hurrah for Uncle Bob!" shouted the boys, forgetful of their surroundings. "And we'll take Jim with us," cried Jack, who had worked up a strong affection for the big trapper since the adventure on the mountain side.

"I wish I could, young uns, but I can't. I've got other bizness. You go back home and go to school; thet's th' place fer young uns. I wish I'd a tho't so when I was a boy. I'll go back to the mountains an' hunt a while,

an' some day, somewhere about here, I'll die an' some feller'll come along an' find me an' say, 'Thet's ole Jim Galloway; he was nuthin' but a trapper.' Mebbe I'll get a tombstone and mebbe I won't. Them mountains is a good 'nough monyment fer the likes o' me. You young uns go back an' grow up to be somethin'. Take an ole trapper's advice, obey th' ole folks, an' try to grow up an' do some good in th' world; and just one thing more I want ter ask, an' — an' — an' thet is — don't forgit me. You young uns an' Bob here is th' only things thet has come inter my life in these forty years thet I don't want ter forgit; an' somehow I don't want ter hand in my chips an' feel thet there ain't nobody in th' world thet wants ter ricollect Jim Galloway."

The boys pressed around the big fellow and coaxed him not to talk like that; promised that they would write him, and that they would never forget him, and that some day they would see him again.

Mr. Sinclair's voice faltered as he took the big hand of his friend — a friend whose life he had once saved, and assured him that he had not lived in vain, and that when he returned from the East he wanted to see him in the

cabin at the foot of Pike's Peak, where they would form a partnership that would last for years to come, and where, if God permitted, they would lie down in their last sleep together.

[The End.]